

Pentecost 23 11/5/20
Matthew 25:1-13 27A

WATCH THEREFORE, FOR YOU KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR.

An article in the *Bismarck Tribune* grabbed my attention this past week. The author tried to make an educated guess as to how much snow we would get this winter. He researched it and consulted several different sources and, I think I accurately summarize his conclusions this way – we have no idea how much snow is coming.

But, it's North Dakota and December and January and February are coming, so I my wise counsel would be to put your golf clubs away and get your snowblower ready. You know it's coming.

Just like the Last Day when Jesus returns again in all of His glory. As we near the end of the Church Year, our worship focuses on the return of Christ. We don't know when that day will be, but we know it's coming. That's why we listen to our Lord's words this morning, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (v. 13).

In our parable today, Jesus uses the wedding custom of the day to teach us about His return. The virgins are friends of the bride. The bride and her family and friends would get ready and gather at the bride's home. The bridegroom and his friends would come to the bride's home to escort them back to his home, where there would be food and festivity that accompanies a wedding. When the bridegroom came, it would generally be dusk, so the light of the lamps was used to light the procession back to the groom's house for the wedding feast. That's how weddings worked.

This was the time before clocks were invented and there certainly was no such thing as text messaging, so the bride and her party would

have to be ready for the groom and his entourage to come at any time. So, they're waiting. They're waiting for the groom to show up. They're waiting. And waiting. And waiting. And then, they wait some more. And you know what happens when you wait, don't you? Your patience wears out and you put the worst construction on the situation and you conclude maybe he'll never even show up, so maybe – just maybe – their waiting is in vain.

The parable before us this morning is pretty straightforward to understand. Jesus is the bridegroom and He's coming back to get His bride, the Church, and take her to the wedding feast of the Lamb in heaven, which has no end. So, we find ourselves waiting for the bridegroom. And waiting. And waiting. Waiting like 2,000 years now.

And, you know all-too-well how hard it is to wait. The 10 virgins certainly do. They become drowsy and fall asleep. And, you say "Shame on them!" Jesus says that we do not know the day or hour of his return, so you have to awake, on guard. But, honestly, it's easy to become drowsy and falling asleep, isn't it?

It's hard to stay awake and watch, because we're waiting and waiting and waiting. And our patience wears out and we forget. All that waiting causes us to forget that we are in the world, but not of the world. We start to think that we have time to do what I want to do. After all, I love me more than Jesus, right? And it shows.

You doubt God's promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you and that He works all things together for good, so you worry and stew and fret. You do not forgive as God has forgiven you in Christ, so instead of living at peace with everyone, there is enmity and animosity. You ogle and covet that woman because she would make you much happier than the wife God has given you. You want and desire, and your neighbor has

more and gets more than you have, and you are jealous and envious, and you even you use your tongue to discredit and defame your neighbor, so that you can look better.

You become drowsy and indulge the desires and lusts of your earthly flesh, allowing the world to squeeze you into its mold, and making yourself perfectly at home in it, and, without warning, the cry is heard, “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet Him.” And, the foolish had no oil in their lamps to greet the bridegroom.

The Parable is our lesson this morning is a call to repentance. Our Lord Christ is forcing us to ask ourselves: Have I grown tired of waiting and become drowsy in my faith? Am I staying watchful, ever ready to hear the cry, “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him”?

Take another listen to the words of Jesus,

“And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying “Lord, open to us (vv. 8-11).”

The wise, Jesus says, “took flasks of oil with their lamps.” Allow me to ask you a question: What made them “wise”?

To answer that question, we turn to the Bible. The Apostle Paul teaches us this in the book of 1st Corinthians, “We preach Christ crucified...Christ the power and the wisdom of God ... He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:24, 30). Jesus

is our wisdom from on high. Think of the words of the wonderful Advent hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,”

O Come, Thou wisdom from on high,
 Who ord’rest all things mightily;
 To us the path of knowledge show,
 And teach us in her ways to go [LSB 357:2].

In the parable, the lamp is the HEART. “No oil” means that your heart is not filled with oil of Jesus’ love, forgiveness, life, and salvation. In other words, your heart is like a lamp: it is either filled with the love, forgiveness, life, and salvation of Jesus, or it is not.

Faith in the heart is always be directed towards Jesus. To save you from sin, death, hell, and the devil, Jesus came to be your Savior. He did it by being born of a mother, taking on human flesh, and taking all your sin and all its wages of death upon His human body and carrying them to the cross. There, He died on the cross for you and three days later, rose again for you. He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for you at the table at the wedding feast of the Lamb in heaven.

To keep you from growing frustrated, patience wearing out, despairing, Jesus gives you the forgiveness, the life, the salvation that He won for you. That happens when He says, “I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” That happens when He says, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” That happens when He says, “Take, eat, take drink, this is the true body and the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.”

Receive those means, hear those words, for through them, Jesus pours the oil of forgiveness, life, and salvation into your heart, that you may

ever be watchful and ready to hear of the Bridegroom's arrival. Which is why we pray this Sunday,

Lord God, send forth Your Son to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.