

"The Ten Virgins" Matthew 25:1-13 Last Sunday 2022

Dear fellow redeemed,

The virgins in the parable from our Gospel are the keepers of the Bridal chamber. They love the Bride and desire for her to be happy, so they eagerly want the Bridegroom to come on the wedding night. They are diligently watching for Him so they can accompany Him to His Bride.

Loving the Bridegroom means loving the Bride, and vice versa. The Bridegroom is Christ, our dear Lord. The Bride is the holy Church, cleansed by her Lord. The wedding night is the final culmination when the Lord will take His people home to the new heaven and the new earth. If we love the Bride, the Church, we desire for Christ to return and remove from us all pain and suffering and death. We want all persecution to end, and the eternal Wedding Feast to begin.

We love the Bridegroom. We do not want to miss His coming for anything in the world. We simply must be found ready so that we can share in the joy of that great Day. So, we take extra care to make sure that we are ready.

How do we prepare? There is a hint if you skip to the end. To those who were not prepared, the Bridegroom says, "Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you." On the flip side, those who are well prepared are those whom He does know, and in turn, know Him. The wise virgins are those who love the Bridegroom and make a great effort to

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be known by Him. They eagerly cultivate a relationship with Him. In the end, He will declare that He knows them.

A true relationship is not found merely in feelings but in concrete ways. The Bridegroom declared His relationship to you in Baptism. He created the relationship in the first place. You do not either create or maintain the relationship.

We get to know the Bridegroom through His Word. We get to know Him when we pay attention to His voice. He wants to speak many things to us. But if we do not have much time for Him, we limit how much we know Him and are known by Him.

In the language of the parable, a wise virgin does not limit how much oil is in the lamp. It should be full, with more to spare. This does not only mean enough oil for the time being but enough to spare for later.

So let us be clear here. The oil that makes us ready to meet the Bridegroom is our faith. Nothing else receives the benefits of Christ to let us enter His eternal Wedding Feast. That faith will also produce good works, although they do not earn heaven for us. A vigorous, living faith will include works.

Now, the devil wants to poke a hole in your lamp so the oil leaks out. If he drains your oil little by little, you might not notice. A little

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less Worship now and then won't kill you, right? But soon it is more and more of the Word being missed, and soon your oil is running low. Faith cannot thrive when satan has convinced you that the Word is unimportant.

Many have wicks that are smoldering, and almost out. As for you, guard yourself! See that you fill up with as much Word and faith and Christ as you can. Settling for enough is what the foolish virgins did.

But our preparation for the coming of the Bridegroom takes the discipline of repentance and humility and carrying one's cross. This is hard work, and it is much easier to say, "I have done enough! Don't give me crosses and repentance! Time to rest!" That also is the way of the foolish virgins.

But remember, it is never the person himself who gives oil. The Word of the Bridegroom does it, even when that Word is on the lips of a brother or sister. Yet it is not enough to hear and not take to heart. It is not enough to plop yourself in a pew and give no thought to the Word. You should ponder with faith the voice of your Bridegroom. But someone who ignores His voice, even if he hears the sound waves with his ears, should not expect the Bridegroom to acknowledge him on the last day. In the same way, if we ignored everything a friend said, he would not remain our friend for long.

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In the parable, the foolish virgins tried to buy enough oil. We get the oil of faith free. Even when you put offerings in the plate, that is not a cost by which you buy faith. Instead, the offerings should be evidence that the voice of the Bridegroom has created faith in you, and in gratitude you give to support the ministry of His Gospel.

But this should remind us that we are without excuse. If we are getting oil without cost, how could we justify our laziness if we have let our lamps go empty? If we find that we have been doing so, the only course of action is to repent and seek the Bridegroom's mercy. On any day before the last, He will be merciful.

So there is still time for us all. The Spirit is willing to keep our lamp full. We cannot by our own work keep it full, but He is gracious and kind to keep us prepared for the Bridegroom.

Without the lamp lit with oil, we would be lost in darkness. We would go through the external motions of our religion, but have no genuine faith. We would have no true, burning desire for Christ. We might think we did, but it would only be the false Christ of our imagination. We might feel strongly for Him, yet never sincerely seek Him in His Word, nor cling to Him with faithfulness that does not turn away in hardship.

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When the Spirit works through the Word to help us, then the lamp of our faith burns brightly to light the way to the eternal Feast. For this reason, the Bridegroom suffered in unnatural darkness upon Calvary. So, we need fear no darkness. The Lord has lit the way for us to the eternal Banquet Hall. There He has earned for us an eternity of wonders and delights better than anything we can experience here.

All this is because the Bridegroom has suffered so much for us. He faced death and hell for us. After all, we are not merely the virgins who accompany the bride to the wedding. We are the Bride, for whom the Bridegroom was willing to suffer all things. His love for us is unimaginably great. The most loving earthly bridegroom is only a pale shadow of the heavenly Bridegroom. Even when we were enemies, He gave His life to cleanse us as His Bride. He counted all suffering as nothing compared to the glory of winning eternal life for us.

So, we cannot buy faith with anything we could ever possess. But Christ our dear Bridegroom has purchased all things for us, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious Blood and His innocent suffering and death.

Our love is not equal to His. But now His Spirit begins to give us a fiery love like His. We begin to count no cost. We begin to love with purity since He has loved us first. We begin to be like our Bridegroom.

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As His friends, we imitate Him. Although this imitation is imperfect in this life, it will be perfect when we reach the heavenly Banquet. When we rest in eternity, we will be like Him.

Let us rejoice and love our Bridegroom and seek His voice, by the grace of His Spirit. Amen.