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November 12, 2017  
Pentecost 23  
ILC, Wichita, KS  
Matthew 25: 1-13; "Keep Your Lamps Lit"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The text which forms the basis for my message this morning is taken from the Gospel which we heard just a few moments ago. I would like to reread the last verse. **If you would like to look at the logo on the front cover of your bulletin... there you will see the words for the verse which forms our text.** From Matthew 25:13 we read:

**"Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."**

Here ends the text.

My good friends in Christ. Today we begin the countdown... the countdown to the end.

The countdown to the end of the Church Year.

As you might have noticed ... all three of our Scripture readings for today ... and for the next two Sundays... talk about ... the end of the world...

And in the Gospel lesson for today we read about a bridegroom... thinking about that... I was reminded that several weeks ago I was at my niece's wedding in Kansas City. At that wedding 12 of my nephews and nieces told me that they were going to do a surprise visit on me when I went to my Mom's in Florida... last week.

Well... they did a surprise all right... like every family my family also has certain food items that are traditional. One of those items is the way my sister, mother, grandmother... all prepared chicken for friend chicken dinners. So... my nephews and nieces... surprised me in that they asked to make my sister's traditional fried chicken dinner.

Now... before any of you give me any more credit than I deserve... my sister stands next to me in the kitchen... practically holding my hand the whole time I made this dinner... for 10 people. The food was delicious and the dinner was a success!

So.... Bridegrooms... and weddings...

Back to the Gospel for today...

In the Gospel lesson for today we heard Jesus talking about ten virgins and their lamps.

- *In this parable Jesus was talking about a crisis.*
- *He was talking about an event in the lives of the 10 virgins.... that was important not only for them but for the bridegroom and everyone connected to the wedding.*

**Let hear the setting for this event:**

According to Jewish tradition... The bridegroom was to come and take the bride from the father's house to his house... for the ceremony. The bridesmaids or young girls... were to wait for the groom and accompany him and the bride to the wedding.

If the wedding were at night, lamps would be needed to light the way.

If there were no lamps, the bride and groom might stumble around or arrive late from having to travel in darkness.

As we reflect on the Gospel for today... I would invite you to join with me as we think on two thoughts:

1. First... let's study the behavior of the 10 virgins or young girls
2. Secondly... what do we do while waiting for the world to end.

**I. In Jesus' parable there were five wise maids and five foolish ones.**

A. Let 's look first at the 5 foolish virgins or the 5 foolish young maidens...

- The foolish ones didn't have enough oil to keep their lamps lit while the bridegroom was delayed.
- When the bridegroom finally showed up, they discovered their lamps were going out.
- It was a crisis.
- It was like forgetting to order your dress until a day before the senior prom or like I often forget to do or waiting until the last minute to make your airline reservations for a family vacation.
- It was a crisis, and the five foolish bridesmaids were in a panic.
- The 5 foolish bridesmaids are like people who only consider their Christian faith to be an add-on to their daily lives.
- These people will not put anyone else's oil lights out, but they won't bother to take care of their own, either.
- They don't necessarily have anything against God, but then sadly, they don't have anything for God either.
- Yet, what the Gospel talks about is more than just a social mistake.
- This parable is about Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and the consequences **(PAUSE)** are eternal.

Jesus had just finished telling his disciples about the signs of the end of times... or the end of the world.

- Notice that Jesus was not all that specific, for He didn't give the disciples any dates.
- What our Lord did..... was to tell the disciples to be ready at all times.
- The verse which forms the text verse for my message today, verse 13 reads:  
**"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."**

**B. So much for the foolish virgins. What about the 5 wise virgins.**

The 5 wise virgins are those who had plenty of oil in their supply.

- In our lives these are the people who grow their spiritual life on a regular basis... You know these people. They are the ones who...
- Study... the Word of God, as a part of their daily lives.
- The wise people are those who pray regularly, have a daily meditational life that they follow... these are the people who receive communion often and generally live the life of a prepared person.

C. Now... just in case some incorrectly interpret the parable... and think that Jesus is saying that we have to gather enough oil to win our own salvation.... Please hear these words:

Jesus is not teaching that by working and gathering oil... we somehow contribute to our own salvation.

- We should not get the idea that we have to work hard for our own salvation or God won't accept us.
- God's grace is in this parable... not works righteousness.
- Jesus is warning us not to behave like those foolish virgins!
- That warning itself is a word of grace and hope when it tells us of the trouble we could run into if we neglect God's Word and His Sacraments.

Our Lord's return to our world hasn't happened, yet.

**II. And the key word is ... yet!**

Perhaps it is good that Christ hasn't returned because that gives us a chance to increase our supply of oil.

The Lord invites you today to increase...

- Your devotional life... do you use a daily devotion like the portals of prayer? If you don't why not start today?
- Do you spend time daily with God in prayer? If not, then why not start... this evening?

For our Lord will return!

And when Christ returns He is going to invite us ... His followers.... to a great, banquet feast. It will be a feast of eternal life with Him in heaven.

And speaking of feasts... this day... the Lord has prepared a feast for us. If you want to fully prepare yourself for the end of the world... then come to the feast our Lord has prepared in the blessed Sacrament of Holy communion.

When we receive Holy Communion, we receive the visible body and blood of our Lord Jesus you receive a visible sign that your sins are forgiven... and that eternal life in heaven with God ... awaits all of us!

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May God bless us this day as we strive to become rich... in God's Word and in His Sacraments.

Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Nicene Creed.