

Text— Matthew 25:1-13

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

The Last Sunday After Trinity is now upon us, and so another Church year is drawing to a close. Thus, we are reminded that time in this world is fleeting and will also draw to a close when Jesus Christ visibly returns in glory to judge the quick and the dead. The signs are all around us that the day of Judgment is surely going to take place shortly, and consequently we had better be ready for it. Indeed, in the second to the last verse of the New Testament our Savior says, "Surely I come quickly." Then the Apostle John by inspiration of God responds, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20) Hence, we all need to be prepared for Jesus' visible return in power and great glory.

In our Scripture selection Jesus teaches important facts by way of a parable, which is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning— an illustrative story which imparts spiritual truths. Thus, our text can be of benefit to all of us as it effectively urges:

"BE READY AND WATCHFUL FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING"

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) How to be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming
- 2) Why to be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming

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Verses 1-4, ----- (Matthew 25:1-4)

When Jesus visibly walked this earth, weddings at that time and place among the Jews were quite festive and could be very lavish if the parents of the couple were wealthy. So, our text opens with Jesus saying: *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be*

likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

The ten virgins were part of the wedding party, attendants who would go and festively guide the bridegroom to the location where the bride awaited and the nuptials were to take place. It was in the evening, so the attendants took lamps which had a wick and were fueled with olive oil.

No one in the welcoming bridal party knew how long it would be before the bridegroom would approach and they could then festively accompany him to the wedding location. Nevertheless, they would need their lamps lit during that nighttime procession to enter the marriage hall, but of those ten virgins we are informed: *five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

Now, Jesus likens *the kingdom of heaven* – His Church – to the virgins with their lamps and how they behaved. The lamps signify the individual Christians with their light of faith, for Jesus says to His followers in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Hence, a living fruitful faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the burning lamp of each Christian, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Think about the type of oil which fuels one's faith in Jesus and keeps its light burning. Holy Writ informs us in Romans 10:17, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And, we read in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "the word of God... effectually worketh also in you that believe." Thus, we Christians need to be constantly supplied with God's Word, the Holy Bible, as preached, read, and attached to visible elements in the Sacraments instituted and commanded by Christ. Take it to heart that our faith in Jesus Christ will die out if it is not properly and regularly fueled with God's Word.

Notice in our text that half of the virgins were foolish in that they *took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

Likewise, Christians who do NOT continue to have God's Word with them at all times to supply their light of faith are very foolish. Oh, there are many professed Christians who do not regularly hear the Word of God preached and who do not make daily devotions and Bible reading a practice in their life, for they show up at church sporadically and while at home their Bibles simply collect dust on a shelf or table. Let us be careful to keep God's Word at hand and to regularly feed upon it, for Jesus our Savior says, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32) Only by faithfully continuing in the Word of God will we be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming.

Verse 5, -----. (Matthew 25:5)

This verse is quite the warning as we read: *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Note that both the wise and the foolish virgins slumbered and slept while the bridegroom delayed his arrival. In like manner, both lax and active Christians frequently fall into spiritual slumber since we are all daily tempted by the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.

Fellow Christians, when we are active in God's Word as we should be, we are tempted to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Consequently, 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns: "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And, 1 John 2:15-17 declares: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Therefore, let us be on guard against falling into spiritual slumber, for only by actively and faithfully continuing in the Word of God will we be ready

and watchful for Christ's second coming.

Verse 6, -----. (Matthew 25:6)

Despite the delay, the bridegroom finally made his approach, for *at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.* Yes, it was a bit later than expected, but the bridegroom was coming and the ten virgins were to go to meet him and accompany him to his wedding.

My friends, Jesus Christ will similarly come at a time perceived by many to be later than expected; nevertheless, He will come, for Jesus Himself says in Luke 12:40, "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Oh yeah, for 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 informs us that "yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Note it well: we need to be spiritually watchful and sober, not spiritually sleeping and drunk.

We Christians are children of light because we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ who is the LIGHT of the world, for Holy Writ reports: "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (Galatians 3:26-28; 1 John 1:5) Accordingly, let us be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming by being on guard against falling into spiritual sleep, continuing faithfully in the Word of God, highly valuing it and all its doctrines, including the proper use of the sacraments instituted and

commanded by Christ.

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As we ponder our text to its conclusion, let us see why to be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming.

Verses 7-9, -----. (Matthew 25:7-9)

The cry had been made at midnight that the bridegroom was coming, and all ten virgins had been slumbering and sleeping until they heard that cry which abruptly awoke them. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.*

As the virgins slept, their lamps had all grown dim as the wick became charred and the oil supply diminished. Observe in our text that the foolish virgins' lamps had actually gone out: they were fully extinguished. Consequently, they asked the wise virgins for some of their oil supply so they could relight their lamps, *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

The application of this part of the parable is that although all Christians may fall into spiritual slumber and sleep, at least the sincere Christians who keep God's Word on hand and in heart are wise in that they can instantly return to God's Word and use it to strengthen their weak faith since the Holy Ghost works through His Word, for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3) On the other hand, Christians who discard God's Word or lay it aside and never think about it will lose their faith in Jesus altogether when they spiritually slumber and sleep, for it always remains true that some "receive the word with joy" but they "have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke 8:13) Yes, some fail to continue in the Word, and yet it's a fact that "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20),

and "the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17) So, we all need to continue in God's Word, "...the holy scriptures, which are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15) Oh, the foolish do NOT continue in God's Word, and consequently their faith will die out, for the time of grace will be ended at Christ's second coming.

Realize that on the last day the unwise who do not continue in God's Word and consequently lose their faith will NOT be able to get faith or a supply of God's Word from their wise neighbors who kept the Word at hand and in their hearts. In our text the foolish were told to go buy their own oil supply which thereby teaches us that no Christian has an extra portion of faith or its personal foundation in God's Word that can be passed on to another. It is as we read in Habakkuk 2:4, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Yes, a person lives by his or her own faith— NOT the faith of another, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:16, 36) Genuine faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord is a necessity if one would be saved!

Verses 10-12, -----. (Matthew 25:10-12)

The wise virgins were ready for the arrival of the bridegroom, *And while the foolish virgins with their extinguished lamps went to buy oil, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: 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.*

Think about what the lesson is here: Jesus Christ at His second coming will welcome those with a living faith in Him into heaven. On the other hand, the foolish folks who let their faith in Jesus die, or who never had faith in Jesus but only a mere pretense, may make a last attempt to go to the Holy Bible in order to come to faith, but it will be too late for them since the time of grace will have ended and the entrance to heaven will be closed to them despite their finally acknowledging and confessing Jesus as Lord. Oh beloved, let us never forget that 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is foolish to delay! Daily repentance is required along with full reliance on Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord, for Acts 4:12 plainly states: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

I've heard some folks point to the penitent thief who hung on the cross next to Jesus and who came to faith in Jesus and was saved during the last hours of his life; such people point to that example and say they'll have fun in this world and worry later about coming to know Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, those folks forget that there was another thief on a cross on the other side of Jesus, and that thief never repented and he therefore went to hell. Yes, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Romans 6:23; John 3:18)

Therefore, be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming by being steadfast in faith in Him, for Romans 3:23-26 relates: "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might

be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Take it to heart there is NO chance to repent, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved once He returns in glory to judge the quick and the dead! NOW is the time to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Verse 13, ----- (Matthew 25:13)

Our text closes with a command given to us by the Lord Jesus, that being: *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.* Thus, we need to be ready and watchful for Christ's second coming because He commands us to do so; and, it is vital for us to be found in the faith of Jesus Christ at His return because on that day the time of grace will have ended for this world.

Indeed, for subsequent to our text we read, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46)

Therefore, let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us continue to make regular use of God's Word, the Holy Bible, since the Holy Ghost works therein to keep us in the faith and strengthen us in the faith. Doing so, we can be and remain watchful for Christ's second coming. Amen.

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