

We bow our hearts in prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name among us. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our text this morning is not about other people. It's about you.

With last week's text, you might have been able to avoid a self-examination of the sin in your life, as you heard about the separation of the sheep with the goats.

Since Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the one who makes it, it is a very clean & clear division.

And in our minds, we can simplify that separation very easily by considering the distinction to be between the heathen and Christians. We like those nice clean divisions.

People who openly confess to be Hindu, Muslim, atheist, and so on, they openly deny the Trinity and the Person and work of Christ.

And even those that claim to be Christian, but openly/proudly hold deviant false beliefs,

such as praying the "Our Mother," instead of "Our Father," (http://www.bethany.net/content.cfm?page_content=blogs_include.cfm&blog_id=241)

there also seems to be a pretty clean cut separation.

But if you feel safety in this nice clean distinction, and aren't so concerned about the judgment that it causes you to examine your own human condition and beliefs,

then perhaps this week's text will,

because here, the distinction between the wise and foolish virgins

isn't one of belief vs. rank unbelief.

It is about you, the "Christian."

Not "you," the "Christians," plural. But "you" ... the "Christian" ... singular.

And I am not talking about you, in contrast to those around you

who may or may not be, or become, hypocrites.

This parable is directed at you and your preparation for eternal paradise.

Just as it is directed at me and my preparation.

So consider the words as you hear them again. Consider how Jesus applies Himself to you.

What blessings and warnings does He give to you?

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said:] "But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

"Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 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, lord, open to us.'

"But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."^(ESV)

These are Your Words, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

The Bridegroom soon shall call us on the Last Day. (ELH, #100)

This is to be a joyful day for everyone, just as weddings ought to be joyful occasions.

The promise of celebration, the anticipation of a life of unity and love.

So is Judgment Day to be...

a day that you prepare for and look forward to with eager anticipation.

But when will that great day be?

Matthew24:3

That is the question that the Disciples originally put to Jesus: “**When will these things be?**”

Jesus had already told them that even He, in His state of humiliation, wasn't privy to that.

So obviously, when isn't important information that you need to know for your salvation.

You just need to know that it will happen, not when, and prepare.

And that is really what this parable is about, Jesus says as much when He finishes it with:

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

And really, would it benefit you to know the day?

Just a few verses earlier, Jesus had compared Judgment Day with the Flood.

And there, the people may not have known the day, but they knew the year, for God had said, “**My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh:**

his days shall be 120 years.”^{Genesis6:3}

And yet, only 8 were saved in the ark. Only 8 wisely prepared for the Flood.

Only 8 were **saved through water.**^{1Peter3:20}

How many foolish do you think pounded on the door to the ark when the waters began?

“Noah, Noah, open to us.” But it was God who had shut that door.

They now believed God would send the flood. But this wasn't a gift of faith in His Word, it was the working of the Law. They were seeing it with their eyes. Judgment had come.

How many of those foolish do you think, if asked if they believed in God,

would have said “yes” even up to the day of the flood? I would imagine, a number of them.

And yet, when God warned them, even gave them the length of time they would have, and even had the sign of a massive ark being built, they foolishly ignored Him.

That day should have been a day of great rejoicing in the Lord's salvation, but it wasn't.

Not for the foolish on the outside. They had not been preparing.

They saw, but it didn't cause them to examine their beliefs or life-styles.

They heard, but it didn't affect them, or at least it didn't concern them enough to repent.

They apparently didn't care if God's name was hallowed among them;

that is, that *His Word was taught in its truth and purity,* (Small Cat.: Explanation to the 1st Petition)

and that [they] as the children of God live holy lives according to it. As our SS is learning.

...And this is what happened when they knew when it would come.

This would be like having 120 years to prepare for a wedding,

and yet you hadn't even put the “save-the-date” card on your fridge,

because it just seemed too far away. How foolish! How sad!

But that was them, 1,000s of years ago. I told you that this text is for you.

You... “**Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.**”

When will your time of grace be up? Will you still be alive when Jesus returns?

You could be. If He returned tomorrow, would you be ready?

Would you **lift up your head, because your redemption draws nigh**^{Luke22:28}

Hosea10:8;Luke23:30

Or would you be crying **to the mountains, "Cover us," and to the hills, "Fall on us."**
What if He decides to tarry longer before His final return, so that you die before He comes?
Are you prepared? Actually, a better question would be: Are you preparing?

If that day were today by a car accident, in your sleep, a stroke or heart attack,
are you preparing for it?

What if that day were May 7th, 2024? Are you preparing for that day?

What if it were September 19th, 2056? Are you preparing for that day?

Or is it too far off.

Or is there an indifference in you? Are you *dishonoring God's name among us,*
by [believing] or living otherwise than the Word of God teaches? (Small Cat.: Expl. to the 1st Petition)

And remember, this is not for other people to answer, but you.

Don't be thinking that someone else needs to hear this,
as you pass over your own self-examination and repentance.

That day will be a very fearful day for those who knew of or cared nothing for Him.

And perhaps even more so for those who did know Him, did at one point care for Him,
but come to realize on that day that they are on the outside of a front door,

crying, "**Lord, Lord, open to us,**" with an earnestness equal to the foolish during the Flood,
but hearing in reply, "**Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.**"

But Jesus in no way desires to say that, not to anyone, let alone you.

And so He bids you, be wise: "**Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.**"

Do not be prepared, as if you could complete this task and move on to the next thing,
but be preparing as a continual part of your daily, hourly life.

Continually, living in self-examination and repentance.

Continually hearing your Lord's Words of forgiveness pronounced by His ministers.

Continually living in the joy of your Baptism as one (like Antoinette this morning)
who has already been saved through water, and passed from death to life.

Continually receiving the foretaste of the rich heavenly banquet as we partake of Jesus'
crucified and risen body and blood.

Continually living as a child of God, **in faith, and hope, and love,** ^{1Corinthians13:13}

eagerly anticipating the day when the Bridegroom soon shall call you...
no matter when that day or time may be.

And Judgment Day will be a joyful occasion, for you who are in Christ, who are preparing.

A day to rejoice because on that day, **He will wipe away every tear from [your] eyes,**
and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore,
for the former things have passed away. ^{Revelation21:4}

A day of feasting Isaiah says, with **a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,** ^{Isaiah25:6}
but really, it will be an eternal life time of feasting and perfect communion
with your Lord and Savior.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria