

Let us pray: **So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.** Psalm 90:12

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today's text for meditation is one of Jesus' parables, where He gives a comparison of earthly things, (things we know and are able to observe), to heavenly things, things we cannot yet know or yet fully experience. So when we hear a parable, we are to meditate, not just on the earthly story part, but especially consider what the heavenly truths are that Jesus is teaching us. As a reminder of the parable, let us listen then, again, to selected portions of it.

As follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said:] "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ... And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ... 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. ...

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

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

The overall context of this parable is an invitation to a wedding feast.

10 bridesmaids have been invited as special guests to the feast.

They have been asked to participate in the entourage lighting the way as the Groom escorts His Bride to the wedding hall where they will celebrate their union.

The wedding hall is the place of feasting, a picture of perpetual satisfaction and celebration not sinful indulgence, but contentment with no worry or anxiety, without care or concern,.

Jesus has used this wedding feast imagery for our eternal joy with Him before.

It isn't an accident that marriage, instituted by God at creation,

is a great picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church, His Bride?

After all, we were created in God's image as the chief recipient of His love.

And just as there is a time of promise and waiting between the engagement and the nuptials, so the Church now is in a time of promise and waiting

until we receive the fullest expression of His love when He returns in glory for our resurrection.

But while our weddings on earth are usually a time of joy and celebration

and bring with them certain privileges and blessings,

and bless the husband and wife with the expectation of a lifetime of companionship,

and loving service, and often, children,

they also mean a life of loving service to one's spouse, and any resulting children, until death.

It is not the "happily ever after" that we fantasize about in our fairytales.

It is a lot of hard work, even when times are good and the service is easily motivated by love.

And that's because we live in this world corrupted by sin, with hearts that are corrupted **by sin.**

There are a lot of things that get in the way of our "happily ever afters."

But here in our text, Jesus teaches us to anticipate the wedding feast as His special guests, even His bride.

It will mean a true and eternal “happily ever after.”

And so now we are in the period of eager anticipation for that day to finally arrive.

But just as with anything that we wait for, the waiting provides us time to prepare.

And that is where Jesus’ parable leads us to today.

He begins with the 10 bridesmaids, which is to be a wonderful comfort to us.

These 10 young maids represent those who are called into the Church of God.

Like the Bride, their maiden status expresses their innocence in the eyes of the Lord.

To Him, it is as though they are holy, though it is true that they have fallen into temptation.

Many-a bride eagerly anticipates choosing her white wedding dress.

The whiteness of the dress does not symbolize her innocence or purity or chastity.

If that were true, then what would it imply of the Groom who traditionally dresses in black?

Instead, the picture here is a reflection of what our heavenly Groom has done for His Bride,

as St. Paul testifies, **Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for Her**

[that is, He died on the cross for her],

that He might sanctify Her, having cleansed Her BY THE WASHING of water with the word,

so that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor,

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,

that She might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27

This is Christ’s wedding present to you.

While He washes you clean in Holy Baptism, just as He *will/has* with Jack Pellegrini this morning,

so He has taken upon Himself all of your sin... guilt... impurity;

the Groom has dressed Himself in black to suffer your embarrassment, shame, punishment & death.

But this time of promise and waiting, as the parable indicates is a time of preparation.

We are to anticipate and prepare for the coming of the heavenly Groom.

At the end of the parable, He admonishes us,

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

His coming will be not unexpected, just unpredicted.

In fact, throughout the Gospels, He warns us of His coming, even giving us signs of it

so that we may be renewed in our anticipation and preparedness.

It is this preparation that is what separates the 10 bridesmaids: the 5 foolish and the 5 wise.

The 5 foolish, had oil in their lamps when they initially began their wait,

but they took no extra oil.

They did not prepare for their delayed Lord’s coming, as they had been warned to do.

And so when He finally came, they were not prepared; their lamps were burning out.

They demanded of the wise ones, ‘**Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.**’

But it was too late; the wise could not share with the foolish, for the time of preparation had run out.

...

There is, perhaps a temptation to accuse the wise ones of being unneighborly.
But we must remember that the point of the story is a warning about the Last Judgment.
Jesus is teaching you each one of us will ultimately stand before Him as our Judge
and will give an account for ourselves.

At that moment, there will be no more time for you to go out and buy more oil:
no time to read your Bible,
no time to Google “the end of the world” or “the last judgement,”
no time for you to visit with your pastor... or call a religious friend.
Nor will you be able to answer according to the faith of anyone else.
He will not accept: “Well, my parents were very devout.”
Nor will He accept: “But Lord, I was a member of Parkland Lutheran Church.”

On that day, you won't be able to blame anyone else for your lack of preparation.
Jesus often warned... and is even now warning you that He will come suddenly
at an unknown time, and will come in dark times and He will be looking for burning lamps.
The foolish ones do not believe or trust His Word, or they don't take it very seriously.
For they get tired and apathetic... or distracted while waiting.
They no longer concern themselves with the acquisition of faith, of Christ.
But what is the end result?
The door to the marriage feast will be shut on them. They will be left out of the heavenly party.
And the One that they had given up learning of and trusting in,
will hear these bone chilling words, ‘**Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.**’

The Lord preserve us from such foolishness and grant us **a heart of wisdom to number our days.** ^{Ps. 90}
The Proverb says, **Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.** ^{Prov.23:23}
Do not be foolish and think you are already wise, as if you already know enough.
Do not be content simply to say that our child or children are baptized so they are good to go.
For these would be the attitudes of one who is no longer storing up oil for the dark days ahead.
We do not yet know what is before us here on earth (except the final judgment),
but the One who does know is urging you to prepare **while it is still day, for the night is coming...**

But the wise, they are those who rest in the Lord.
They do not rely on their own knowledge or strength of faith, but rely on Christ.
They daily grow in their knowledge of God and His Word by their constant refreshment in it.
They converse with their Lord through meditation on His Word and prayer.
They cherish their baptism, returning to it often in repentance and faith,
clinging to Jesus's blood and righteousness as their glorious, white, wedding garment.
Their faith is nourished and sustained as their hunger and thirst for righteousness
drives them to the Lord's Supper, where they partake of Jesus body and blood for their forgiveness.

These will not only feast here in these latter days, but they will feast with the Lord after the Last Day.
To them, the heavenly Groom will open the doors of the eternal wedding hall
and they will go in with their Lord to celebrate His unity with them and LIVE “happily ever after.”

Lord, grant this onto us all. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria