

WISELY AWAIT OUR LORD'S RETURN

I. The Reign of Heaven

II. The Shout

III. The Oil of Readiness

Matthew 25:1-13

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2020 | END TIME

THIRD SUNDAY OF END TIME

SAINTS TRIUMPHANT

<i>Old Testament</i>	Isaiah 65:17–25
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 121
<i>New Testament</i>	1 Thessalonians 5:1–11
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 25:1–13

GRANTS PASS & Medford

Divine Service, Rite Two, ELH p. 60

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 46 Sing Praise to the God of Israel

Chief Hymn – ELH 543 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

Distribution Hymn – ELH 310 At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing

Closing Hymn – ELH 590 O Happy Day When We Shall Stand

Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches

Medford & Grants Pass, Oregon

Edward L. Bryant, Pastor

Matthew 25:1–13 (CSB)

25 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ When the foolish took their lamps, they didn’t take oil with them; ⁴ but the wise ones took oil in their flasks with their lamps. ⁵ When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ “In the middle of the night there was a shout: ‘Here’s the groom! Come out to meet him.’

⁷ “Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’

⁹ “The wise ones answered, ‘No, there won’t be enough for us and for you. Go instead to those who sell oil, and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ “When they had gone to buy some, the groom arrived, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Later the rest of the virgins also came and said, ‘Master, master, open up for us!’

¹² “He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you!’

¹³ “Therefore be alert, because you don’t know either the day or the hour.

Dear fellow redeemed: How much do you know for sure about first century Jewish weddings? Me neither. We sometimes work backwards from Jesus’ parables to make conclusions, but we don’t know for sure. But that’s OK, because we don’t need to know to understand Jesus’ point. He is returning; it may be a while; it will be sudden, you cannot *get* ready then so you must *be* ready; and whatever it takes to be ready, you better have enough. That is what it means to

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Jesus begins with a common expression, as Matthew terms it, “The kingdom of heaven is like...” The kingdom He’s talking about isn’t geographical; it refers to “the royal deeds of God in Jesus, beginning in his earthly ministry, then in the intervening years as his disciples wait, and finally in the fullness of his reign at the unknown day of his Parousia.”¹ This parable tells us what it will be like when the reign of God comes to its fullness in Jesus’ return and the resurrection, and especially in the resurrection and eternal bliss of the righteous.

Do with think enough about the reign of heaven, either now or at the last day? We should. While it isn’t something we can see, we do live under His reign, and that is something that we should think about in view of the affairs of men.

¹ Gibbs, Jeffrey A., *Concordia Commentary, A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture, Matthew 21:1-28:20*, p. 1318, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 2018

Remember, He reigns as Lord of the Universe. The earth orbits the sun and the moon the earth because He has so decreed. As the Bible says, ***“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.”*** (Colossians 1:15–17, CSB)

Notice that includes also the spirits, the angels and the demons, and also the powers of the earth. Including those who seek power in our country.

He also reigns through His word, proclaimed by His church, and all salvation is accomplished through Him. ***“He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”*** (Colossians 1:18–20, CSB)

I say to the guiltiest sinner, “You have peace with God,” and it is so because our Lord says so. I say to powers of the earth, complicit in the sins of the age, such as gross deceit, the destruction of marriage, the worship of nature, the killing of the unborn, and so on “Repent or perish,” and it is so because God says it is so. He says, ***“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*** (Galatians 5:19–21, ESV)

If we acknowledge the reign of God, and we look forward to our resurrection to its fullness, then we acknowledge Christ as Lord, and are at odds with the culture of an unbelieving age. Are you? What if you were a college student, government employee, military officer, nurse, doctor, or someone else required to take “sensitivity training,” which is coercive re-education, because you expressed value for an intact family, or the natural role of men and women. Would you say what you are told so say, something like “men can have babies too,” to keep your job? Would you say that the material world is all there is, and mankind can achieve paradise on earth?

We know there are re-education camps in Communist China, but don’t think the ungodly philosophy, false religion, and unbelief are only over there, or the coercion to deny what is true.

But Christ is Lord, so we look forward to His establishing His reign in all its fullness. Or do you? Are you ready?

II. The Shout

You won’t have time to get ready when He comes. [Slap the pulpit and shout, “He’s here!”] You have to BE ready. Back to Christ’s parable: ⁶ ***“In the middle of the night there was a shout: ‘Here’s the groom! Come out to meet him.’***

⁷ ***“Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’***

Some were ready and some were not, and there was no time to get ready, for as Scripture says, the end will come ***“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:52, CSB)

III. The Oil of Readiness

In Jesus' parable there are ten virgins to greet the bridegroom, five wise and five foolish. ALL were expecting Him, so Jesus is here talking about people who are in the church, had been in the church, or otherwise at one time knew and believed that our Lord will come. It may be a long delay, but He will come.

Some didn't have enough oil. What does this picture? Some pare this down very minutely, saying that the lamp is one thing, the flame another and the oil another. Could be. But we could also just call this the "oil of readiness." It is whatever we need to be ready when the Lord returns.

It is righteousness of course, the righteousness that comes from God, was accomplished by Christ, and is ours by faith.

But some lose that faith because they are mired in sins of the flesh, so they lack repentance.

Some are tied up in the worries, riches, and pleasures of life, so that they forsake the word, and lack the nourishing gospel of the Spirit.

Some are deceived by the lies of Satan and the world, so they lack the truth.

Some grow tired of the conflict, so they lack perseverance.

Some fall in love with the world, so they lack faithfulness.

But whatever they may lack, whatever oil of readiness they were short of, it was because of their foolishness. To be foolish is to act contrary to what you know is reasonable, right, or true, especially lacking foresight.

If your gas gauge is on "E" and you set out across the boondocks anyway, that's foolish. If you build a fire in your living room (its been done) that's foolish. If you don't finish high school, and still hope to make it in life, that's foolish. If you know your blood pressure will give you a stroke, but don't take your medicine, that's foolish.

Now you know you are tempted in this world to treasure sins and not repent, like gossip, resentment, anger, etc., so listen to the gospel, which is the power of our reigning Lord.

You know there is deceit all over, so continue in the word of Christ, that you may know the truth.

You know that the Devil is the accuser, so listen to the comforting words of Christ's absolution.

You know that your hope is in Christ alone, so put away pride and heed the rebuke of the Lord, so that your hope is only in Him.

You won't have time to get ready, so be ready. Be ever faithful in receiving the life-giving means of grace, the gospel in word and sacrament. For there is our Lord's gift of righteousness, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

AMEN