

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church – Oconomowoc
Pentecost 23 – November 12, 2017
Second Last Sunday of the Church Year
“Ready or Not, Here I Come!”
Matthew 25:1-13
Rev. John Kelling, Emeritus

*Use this insert for home study of the text for today,
and for personal assessment of your faith*

Several times in Scripture, Jesus speaks about being ready. All of these examples foreshadow the end times of which we are entering. Jesus tells us to be ready for His second coming, the day and hour unknown. Many of these examples also include warnings of the consequences if we are not ready and waiting. The story in Matthew is one of them.

Ten virgins had been invited to a wedding reception. We can only assume they were given an advance invitation to participate. With that invitation should come a certain amount of preparation. In our day, we start thinking about the date, the gift, who might be there, our relationship to the couple, even what we might want to wear. We waste no time getting ready, even if it's a year or more out.

- † How prepared were the virgins when the day finally came?
- † Five were identified as being “foolish” even before we knew why. What is Jesus inferring about their commitment to the bridegroom?
- † What makes the remaining five “wise”?

Many times we have to wait for the wedding party to arrive at the banquet hall for the reception to begin. We run out of things to say to other guests and people to meet. We might start to lose interest in the joy of the moment in the long wait. We might even be a little resentful in having to spend our time waiting. It seems the virgins waited a long time for the bridegroom to come. They too may have lost some of their zeal for the moment.

- † What does this say about our wait for Jesus to return?
- † The “wise” were prepared to wait it out. What does this say about faithfulness?

Being prepared is a personal thing. Preparedness is not something we can give to others to make them ready. Either you are or are not. For Jesus, it's

almost like, “Ready or not, here I come!” The “foolish” virgins asked to borrow oil from the “wise”, and were refused.

- † Was it selfish that the “wise” would not share their oil?
- † How would this act have compromised the “wise” virgins’ outcome?
- † How is this different than “sharing” one’s faith?

Many of the Scriptural references like this one speak about “trimming” the lamps. This was done to conserve oil. Wicks were shortened to give less light when not needed, and extended to give full brightness as required. (ex: I remember adjusting the wicks of the old kerosene lamps we had in the house as a child.)

There are times in our lives we, too, can conserve the use of our faith. We don’t need to give off the full brightness of faith around other believers, yet we still give light. But when our faith needs to shine brightly in the face of challenge, confrontation and fear, we are able to extend our wicks in the full brightness of faith in Christ that comes through us (*“Let your light shine before men...”*)

- † How are your wicks “trimmed” as you wait for Jesus to return?
- † Do you have enough oil (faith) for the wait?
- † Are you losing zeal for the moment (getting bored) as you wait?
- † What do you anticipate happening when He comes?

The text is clear about what happens to those not ready and waiting when Jesus, the Bridegroom appears. Those ready will enter into the banquet hall and the door is shut behind them. No one else enters. The same will be true for heaven. When Christ returns, believers, whose lamps are ready and trimmed will go in. That’s the promise of faith. They have been “wise” unto salvation. But there are far more “foolish” people in the world who either ignore the invitation offered to them to attend, or will try and wait until the last minute to get themselves ready, but miss the event. Either way, Jesus clearly warns of their loss. They will try to rationalize their way to salvation – pounding on the door for a second chance, but to no avail. The closing words of the text are very blunt – Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, I DON’T KNOW YOU!”

In these final days (end times)...

- † In what position is your wick?
- † Will you have enough oil to wait for Him?
- † Are you dressed and ready for the banquet to come?
- † Are you excited about seeing the Bridegroom face-to-face?

**I PRAY YOU ARE READY AND PREPARED
READY OR NOT... HE IS COMING!**

-To God Be the Glory -