

Matthew 25:1-13 ESV

The *Readiness Business!*

Services: Sunday, 11/12 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 11/13 at 7 PM

Church Year: 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, 22nd after Trinity – 2017

We are observing Bethlehem's 113th Church Anniversary, 1904 – 2017

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: *Today we are observing Bethlehem's 113 Anniversary!* This congregation has existed for many years, but for what purpose? **We are in the *readiness business***; that means we strive to rightly ✦ handle God's Word and ✦ administer the Sacraments *so that the Holy Spirit can **make** and **keep** people ready for Jesus' return!*

Today's gospel reading is the parable of the ten virgins; TLSB has this summary: "**Jesus warns that many invited to share in the eternal joy of His kingdom will miss out by failing to have a living faith at the end**" (TLSB, 1638). Jesus told this parable on Tuesday of Holy Week, just a few days before He died, to ✦ *expose pretenders*, ✦ *call to repentance*, and ✦ *keep those who know Him ready for His return!*

1. **Ready or Not:** ¹ **"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom."** // All the virgins represent those who SAY they are Christians **and BELIEVE** they are ready for Jesus' return. In reality, some know Jesus – *ready*, and some do not know Him – *not ready*.
 - a. Categories and proof: ² **"Five of them were foolish, and five were wise."** ³ **For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,** ⁴ **but the wise took flasks of oil with their**

lamps.” // First Jesus said *five were foolish* and *five were wise*. Then, *when they took action*, their foolishness—*as in **no** oil*, and wisdom—*as in **extra** oil*, was made known.

- b. The ten: Lenski noted: “...**this division of the number ten [suggests] that quite a host of Christians [that is, those who SAY they are Christians] will be found without sense [that is, being foolish] at the Lord’s coming**” (963).
- c. The lamp and oil: Think of **the lamp** representing their outward claim to be Christians—*all ten had a lamp* and **the oil** representing their faith in Jesus—*the inner relationship between sinner and Savior*. The **wise** had both, but the **foolish** were empty on the inside. “**In Scripture those are called foolish that do not obey the Word of God, but follow their own mind, will not be taught, accept no opinion but their own**” (Kretzmann, NT I:139).
- d. They all *thought* they were ready: ⁵ “**As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.**” // If a soldier knows his enemy is coming to attack, *he won’t rest until he is fully prepared*. “**So this sleeping pictures the security and the assurance with which the virgins awaited the bridegroom’s coming; they felt that they were perfectly ready, that they could add nothing more to their preparation**” (Lenski, 966). Since Jesus IS definitely coming, let each of us ask, “Am I ready? Is my trust in Jesus and His finished work for my entrance into the feast?”

2. **The Problems:** ⁶ “But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.”
 // The cry was *at midnight* and *sudden!* Imagine being asleep, *then being awakened by a loud shout*; Jesus will come like a thief in the night! Also, note that *all of them rose*, thus *all of them thought they were ready!*
- a. No oil: ⁸ “And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’” // Remember, the wise had flasks of oil, so they were ✓ aware of their sins, ✓ sorry for their sins, and, ✓ trusting in Jesus and His work! As soon as the foolish ones recognized their immediate need, *they sought help!*
 - b. No extra oil: ⁹ “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.’” // The wise ones gave good advice, “Go and buy,” but, unfortunately, *it was too late!*
3. **Joy or Sadness:**
- a. Open and great joy: ¹⁰ “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.” // Jesus will come at the appointed time (Acts 17:31) and *those who know Him* will be welcomed in; then they will no longer experience death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4)! They will be blessed forever; but, *right after they enter*, the door will be shut, *never to be opened again!*

- b. Shut and great sadness: ¹¹ “**Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’** ¹² **But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’” //**
- i. So WHY will many be left out of the great eternal celebration? **Because they do not know Jesus!** Maybe they did at one time, but it is essential for each of us to CONTINUE to know Him!
 - ii. Prevention: Since the devil, the world, and our own sinful natures want to pull us away from Jesus, **BLC is in the readiness business!** When a child is not baptized, we urge baptism into Christ! When a person is trusting in his own goodness, we show him God’s Word and point him to Jesus! When a person is no longer hungry for God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament, we show them their need and call them to receive! With all such things, we are *trying to prevent people from missing out on God’s awesome, eternal blessings!*

Conclusion: ¹³ “**Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.**” // So let us continue to benefit from the work of the Holy Spirit to **GET** people ready and to **KEEP** people ready *until we are finally with God forevermore!*

Let us pray: Dear Jesus, TY for knowing us; help us to ever-keep knowing You! Amen!