**Matthew 25:1-13**

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. **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. **5** As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. **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. **8** And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ **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.’ **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. **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.’ **13**  Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

**“Fueled Up, Ready To God”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Gal 1:3-5).

We are at that time of the year when there is a need to wrap things up. Outdoors items like hoses, lawn chairs, and everything else goes away. The fields are getting closer and closer to being emptied of their fruitfulness. What we wear now changes from free flowing to far more restrictive clothes. Even if a person has never heard about a Day of Judgment, we still feel it this time of year from creation.

The Church also wants to wrap things up. The next three Sundays helps us end the Church Year by focusing on Christ’s return. Jesus in our parable today is the bridegroom. Those who believe in Him would be the Ten Virgins. Finally, there is that warning about a misplaced sense of security with those having lamps. You can try to figure out if you are wise or foolish, but being both saint and sinner there is a more important question. What makes you wise and not foolish? Clearly, it is nothing in us or from us that does it. Instead, the oil makes all the difference. What we receive as fuel for our lamps by Word and Sacrament is a true and living faith. Since no one knows the time when Jesus will come, the wise watch with hopefulness prepared while the foolish just perish staring at the door.

1. **Forgetting to take account of the times makes any a fool.**
2. Realize shortsightedness has a problem beneath the surface.

* The foolish virgins described by Jesus had oil for a time, but there was no need for more than what they had.
* They figured the times were in their hands neglecting to see how the bridegroom comes on his own time.
* Luther gives this warning about the 3rd commandment explaining, “We should fear and love God so that we do no despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.”
* Foolishness happens when we are not serious about God’s Word, follow our made up opinions as truth, or neglect how the Gospel has always something to give.

1. Know then that desperation never turns out to do any good.

* False security fell to pieces when the arrival of the bridegroom had the cry, “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.”
* Just as a drowning person can make someone else into a victim, the other virgins knew they would all lose if they tried to help the foolish.
* When we become desperate as sinners lovelessness seeks to blame others, makes unreasonable demands, and maybe looks for help.
* However, on the Last day, we cannot hide behind our family, friends, or anybody because the fuel for a living faith in Christ never came from them.

1. Face finally when the door is shut works will not save.

* The foolish virgins tried to become wise, but when they figured out the need for fuel the time had already passed.
* Upon returning they said, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ but neglect came at a cost to hear, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’
* This shutting of the door reminds us of how God shut the door on the Ark before the flood and that was the end of that.
* Our life needs good works and love, but without the oil of faith in Jesus nothing works, “…for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

1. **Filling up with the oil God gives is good all the time to make any wise.**
2. Endure the times for God is being thoughtful to us.

* The wise virgins knew there was enough oil to go around and took advantage of what would keep their lamps burning.
* Rather than the times being in their hands, they passed through them with careful attention upon the coming bridegroom.
* Even in these gray and later days, days full of wickedness and hardship, there is oil enough supplied by God’s means of grace.
* Jesus holds out His Word and Sacrament as fuel to know, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

1. Keep calm for Jesus comes as the bridegroom.

* Instead of frantic reactions, the wise virgins awoke ready to greet the bridegroom when they heard the cry.
* Their lamps had additional oil overflowing, which meant gladness to go even in the time of deepest darkness.
* The God of all grace brings perfect love proving that the careful sacrifice of Christ is sufficient in every way.
* Hiding behind Jesus is what baptism gives and so daily He tells His forgiven, “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4)

1. Celebrate then the eternal joys God has opened.

* The wise virgins were ready and able to enter the wedding feast and there was no delay.
* While death brings great sadness, Christ brings the opposite and without disruption for any to enter His kingdom as gift of faith.
* God’s wisdom by the cross opens to us all comfort so that, “you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.”
* Entering the wedding feast will happen, but Christ even now brings us to His feast with wisdom to hope in Him as His glorious Day draws near.

No one likes to come up short, but our parable reveals it can happen more than just in life at times. Whether it is from forgetfulness, negligence, or just being plain obstinate a living faith in Christ can die. Without fuel the lamp looks nice, but only the foolish imagine they do any good. Yet, the Lord is never stingy in what He gives by His Word and Sacrament. Even a simple Word of Christ is full of abundant grace to restore whatever is empty. Since no one knows the time when Jesus will come, the wise watch with hopefulness prepared while the foolish just perish staring at the door. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.