

# The Bridegroom is coming

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Watch; Faithful; Kingdom of God / Matthew 25:1–13

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- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Coming King. Amen.

## Wedding Plans

Our text describes a typical Jewish wedding procession, so it's only right to ask today, Have you ever planned a wedding - either yours or one of your kids? Nine years ago we were in the midst of wedding plans and I can tell you that we didn't prepare last minute. Depending on how elaborate you want the day to be, preparation can take months (and sometimes years). Can you imagine an engaged couple on their wedding day if there was no preparation—securing the pastor, sending out invitations, planning the food, buying the wedding dress, renting the tuxedos, booking the reception hall, or getting the marriage license? What would happen if the day came and no one was ready and you show up at the church to find out there's another event taking place and then you go to the reception hall and find out it's not your wedding party. I'm guessing that bridezilla would be out and then there would be motherzilla. - That would be the mother of the bride.

Yes, Jesus tells a parable of a wedding feast, but this one Jesus describes is of eternal proportions. In this parable he provides you and me a warning...be prepared and ready!

As former North Dakota District President Baneck says in a sermon on this text: "Everything we need to understand in this parable is in the first verses."

**English Standard Version Chapter 25**

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

## Kingdom of heaven.

In this parable the kingdom of heaven is the same as the wedding feast! So the questions you may be asking this morning? What is the kingdom of heaven? Where is the kingdom of heaven? Is this where we go when we die? How do we get there? What is the relationship between a

marriage feast and the kingdom of heaven? If this heavenly marriage feast is actually a feast, What will we eat and drink? Is this someplace I want to be?

Dear Saints! The kingdom of heaven is wherever Christ is! The kingdom of heaven is in Eden, where God dwelt with Adam and Eve in complete perfection - no sin and no death - no tears! That was before the fall, so where is it today?

The kingdom of heaven is it far removed from us as Christ is sitting on his heavenly throne and at a great distance? NO WAY!

Jesus Christ is here in His Word! Jesus Christ is here in the waters of Baptism. Jesus Christ is here in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Jesus Christ is living and serving through every Christian in this world.

And yes, where Christ is there is a return to Eden! Forgiveness of sins, new life, resurrection, joy, peace, hope, restoration. And there, where Christ is, where the kingdom of heaven is, there is the heavenly marriage feast of the Lamb.

And it is yes, the kingdom of heaven, the marriage feast of the lamb, into which Christ invites you! To be his, to receive his many gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. He invites you out of sin, death and hell, and into his eternal wedding feast.

But as long as we live in a broken world, we only get a foretaste of the feast to come. But as the whole world continues to suffer, the kingdom of heaven is God's promise and rescue to all who repent and believe!

## Ten Virgins

The Ten virgins in our text would be similar to bridesmaids of today. As the wedding day drew near, part of the joy and anticipation of the festivities includes the bridegroom coming to meet his bride. His coming would be a surprise. He would come either in the daytime or at midnight. And for the bride - she was to be ready whenever he came - as her bridesmaids kept her company and awake for the anticipated arrival!

The text talks about five foolish stupid virgins and five wise virgins! The virgins needed their lamps, as the bridegroom was delayed and it was late. They would need oil for their lamps to keep them trimmed and burning.

The wise virgins were prepared and ready for the bridegroom when he arrived. They had ample oil to keep filling their lamps. These five wise virgins are believers of Christ to this day! Sinners - yes! Repentant sinners - yes! Believers in Jesus - yes!

The foolish virgins were not prepared and were not ready. When the bridegroom arrived, they were off searching for oil and when they came back, the doors were shut and no way in, for the bridegroom says, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you." These foolish virgins have more cares

and concerns about the world. They care more for themselves. Sure, they might like to go to the eternal feast...but they are sinners! Repentant sinners - no way. Therefore, not believers in Jesus.

## Lamps of oil

The foolish virgins have lamps that are filled with all sorts of junk that do not keep the lamp of faith lit. There's no fuel to the fire so to speak. They fill the lamps with wealth, sports, government, Hollywood and sports heroes, their kids, the pursuit of business, their own idols.

Their lamps are filled with apathy - not knowing what they believe, not caring whether they believe or not. They take a chance on if there is a god out there he will let everyone "in".

Their lamps are filled with complacency - it's someone else's job to have the oil, I'll just bide my time and then at the last hour I'll bum some oil off a friend and get in. I'll let them do the work.

Some of the foolish may be downright evil in their outward words and actions and even mocking God and persecuting those who believe in him. Others may appear to be good people doing very good humanitarian acts, but that is not what fill their lamps. Good works do not fill lamps of faith. And these foolish virgins will hear, "I do not know you."

Still the wise virgins are sinners...you and me. They participate in having idols. They are apathetic and complacent. They don't deserve to enter the marriage feast either. But something is different about them. Something is different about their lamps. The lamps of faith of the wise virgins are filled with Christ. Consider these words of Martin Luther: "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts and kept me in the true faith." The true faith is what the wise virgins have, The Holy Spirit feeds and fills our faith with Christ, making us holy and keeping us in the true faith.

And yes dear Saints, Jesus is teaching about the Last Day, when the bridegroom is coming and will return in all glory and call the repentant believers to the eternal marriage feast.

And when He returns, you who are wise, will have been filled with Jesus, which means that you are prepared.

Dear Saints, your lamps are filled with Christ in His Word - which sustains your faith through all of life's tears. Your lamps are filled with Christ in His font - where faith was created in you, and there you first entered the kingdom of heaven. There he washed you clean. There your sins are forgiven. There he shields you and wards off Satan's constant attacks. In the Water and the Word of the font you were baptized and are still baptized. Your lamps are filled with Christ at this Altar - where Christ enters your body and soul to forgive your sins, strengthen your faith in this difficult and broken world, and this is indeed a foretaste of the feast to come.

And the day is coming, when the Bridegroom comes to rescue you and bring you to the eternal marriage feast - where there will be no more tears.

This is parable isn't just about the kingdom of heaven, the virgins or the lamps. But most of all it's about the promised return of the...

## Bridegroom

Jesus is the bridegroom. His church, you and I, is the bride. This marriage imagery of Christ the bride/Yahweh the bride is seen throughout Scriptures. We see it with faithful Yahweh of the Old Testament who always was faithful to his bride Israel when they went off and fooled around in adulterous relationships with other gods.

Yes, we are like Israel, we too are adulterous in our behavior with God, yes we may be wise, but yet we daily chase after the gods of the day, as we forget who our true God is. We don't make the leap from Sunday to Monday very well. We even fail to love our neighbor as ourselves. We live as the foolish virgins do.

God must divorce us, we must be separated from him forever. We must hear the words, "I don't know you." How can he be the bridegroom of a rebellious people, of a sin-stained bride, who has no reason to where white at the wedding.

Yet the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, comes to be divorced from God in our place. That's what happens when the Bridegroom calls out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" There on the cross, the Bridegroom buys back His bride. There at the cross, the Bridegroom buys you back with His very own blood and makes you white, holy, sinless, and glorious. There on the cross he doesn't see you as a bridesmaid, he sees you as a bride.

Dear Saints, Jesus is your bridegroom, and you are the ones that have been made white by the blood of the lamb. Dear Saints, this parable is about the Bridegroom who prepares you for the marriage feast of the Lamb on the last day. He is the one that fills your lamps of faith with himself in his life, death, and resurrection. And yes, as the bride of Christ he makes you ready to enter the feast...no matter when he comes, because your lamps will be trimmed and burning.

Dear Saints, you are ready and prepared for the coming Bridegroom, not because you did anything, but because your Bridegroom that is coming, came once before and gives you all the blessings of that previous coming to you. He fills your lamps of faith. Praise be to God, that He is the one that makes you ready and prepared.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.