

‘Scary things will happen’ Mat 25:1-13

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 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.' 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. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

All three readings for today tell us about one and the same thing. About the day of the Lord. About the day when Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings will come back to restore His creation in its goodness, and to purify it from all evil.

Today we'll talk about three things. First, about the Biblical message, or we can say about the Church's message, about our message. Second, we'll talk about this parable of ten virgins, and what we can learn from it. And finally, about how to get ready for the second coming of Christ.

So, the first one, about the Biblical message, or about the message of the Church. We kind of have lost it, and by 'we' I mean us Christians in the West. In so many places Christian message has really been watered down to something very shallow.

We can try to summarize this shallow message by saying that Christianity is 'about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace, about attaining well-being and getting along with other people.' If you are good with these then you are ... I guess, Christian.

But if we look at what God's narrative tells us, it is quite a different story. Rich, powerful, relevant and corresponding to the reality story. We have spoken about it a lot and we can summarize Biblical message in four key event. Four key events.

They are... in the very beginning - the creation of everything. Then, the Fall. When sin and death came into this world. Then it is what we call the Christ event, that is Jesus life, death and resurrection.

And finally, fourth one, the second coming of Christ, or the Last Day, or the Restoration of all creation for life eternal. These four give us the big picture of Biblical message.

Unfortunately we kind of don't like to talk about these four pillars of the Biblical message. But they are as four walls for the house, or as four legs for the chair, or four wheels for the car. Take one wheel away and see how well the car drives.

We don't like to talk about the Creation. Why? I guess because God given perspective on the origins of the Universe may not fit well with many peoples faith in so called, so presented scientific explanations of our origins.

What are people going to think if we tell that we believe that personal God created everything. But this is exactly what the Bible reveals as the first and the most important event in the Bible.

God who created and ordered this world. Who created man in His image and likeness, to be His representative on earth, who looked at everything and said with joy and satisfaction. 'It is very good.'

If we take away this event... then what do we do with God's identity? He is identified through the Old Testament and God the Creator. Christ, the Son of God is identified as the same God, through whom everything was created.

If He is not the Creator, why would we believe that He has a power to save us from sin and death?

We don't like to talk about the Fall either. For the Fall is about ... sin. Yes, about sin. And who likes to speak about sin these days? Is this some kind of obsolete word, that belongs to dark ages long gone?

It doesn't actually matter whether we use this word or not, we can't escape the reality of sin. We encounter it all around us, and - within us. Think about our thoughts, about our emotions, about our desires.

How much do we control them? We know that jealousy, hatred, envy are not good emotions. Still we have them. We can't control our thoughts. If they were visible to others for just one day, or even hour, what would happen with us. We should probably die out of shame.

Our desires, our will. People usually know what is good and what is not. They also know that wrong choices will lead to bad consequences. Still, how often do we desire what we clearly know is wrong. And how often we do something that we know will have bad consequences.

So we don't like to talk about the Creation, we don't like to talk about the Fall, and we clearly don't like to talk about the second coming of Christ. It is difficult to get around it though, for the message about the Lord's day is everywhere. In the Old Testament and in the New. You can't miss it. And you can't get rid of it.

But, of course, it is not the most popular message, that's for sure. Because, this message about the second coming of Christ actually grows out of those two which we already are hesitant to share.

This message about the second coming of Christ is simply a logical conclusion of the Biblical narrative. Think about it, if true God is the Creator, if goodness of God's creation is corrupted by sin and death, then it makes sense that He Himself comes to restore His creation.

Look at it, how beautiful it is. Even in its current state. How much we have achieved as humanity. It's amazing. How much can our Creator rejoice in it? How beautiful we are, how interesting our life stories and our relationships are.

And God knows them all. He knows your story. All of it. This is why He desires all people to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. For He loves His creation. He loves you. He loves your company and wants to enjoy it eternally.

And it makes sense that He doesn't want sin and death to have the last word in our lives, nor in the history of this, of His wonderful world. If God is the Creator His second coming is absolutely necessary.

There are different description of the second coming of Christ, - it is about judgment, about purifying this world with fire and destruction of ungodly, about separating sheep from goats, about hell, eternal fire, about outer darkness where there will be gnashing of teeth, and so on. Not a nice picture.

But let's reflect a little bit on this big picture. God reveals Himself as the holy God. Holy is the most often used adjective for God. What does it mean? God's holiness is something we can't either describe or understand. That's God very essence.

But we can see from the testimonies of prophets and apostles what happens when people come into God's presence. His holiness can't coexist with our sinfulness. Or better put, our sinfulness can't coexist with His holiness.

No sinful man can come into God's presence and stay alive. But God wants to be among us. He was with us in the beginning, in Eden. He instituted the Divine Service so that He can be among us and bless us, while we are separated by sin.

He promised that He will come and purify us from all our sins so that He can be with us again. Forever. For He created us, He created you - to live with Him.

When you think about Christ's second coming, think about the holy God coming in His glory, to dwell among us. You see, His holiness will destroy every evil, every sin, every ungodliness, and will restore the goodness of His creation.

But then, this God knows that if He comes in His holiness, we all will be destroyed. That's why He first came as one of us, as a man. He came to rescue us from sin and to cover us with His holiness.

He came to give us His Spirit, who will keep us until the Last Day, and will bring us into eternal fellowship with the Son and the Father. We can't neglect any of these four parts of our message.

The Creation, the Fall, the Christ event and the final restoration. If we neglect any of them, it is like taking wheels of the car. Take one off. Take two off. Take three off.. what will happen? We can see what happens...

This is what happens when you neglect these parts of God's message. We are left with meaningless and empty Christianity of 'being nice people and feeling happy'. Who needs it... no one. Right. This is why so many churches in the West decline.

Then we are left with a shaky worldview without the beginning, without explanations what is wrong with us, and what is our future's hope. We are left with this buddy Jesus, who assures us that all nice people go to heaven.

And basically all people except few are nice people. It is so sad... So let's not allow this to happen. Let's be conscious and deliberate about what we believe and what is our message to the world.

Now to our second question about the parable of ten virgins. This parable is about the second coming of Christ. What to say? This time not much. We need to admit that we don't know enough about wedding ceremonies and traditions at Jesus time.

So we have to honest and say that we can't explain this parable in all its details. We can see that probably Jesus used this parable to suit His goals. Peoples' reaction in this parable wouldn't make sense in a real life.

Why not to share the oil, when lamps were going out? Why to be so harsh and to lock the doors and to say: "I don't know you." But if these actions don't make sense in a real life, they make a lot of sense in this parable.

Three things that we can emphasize. First, there will be separation. There will be those who are ready to enter God's wedding feast, and those who will not be ready. Second there will be exclusion. This is not a joke.

Those who will not be ready, will not enter. The doors will be locked and they will stay outside. The third. Obviously those who will be ready, will not be able to help those who won't be ready.

It makes sense. We can't give our faith to others. It is our faith, our trust to the Father, the Holy Spirit with us. That's why this saying that God doesn't have grandchildren. He has only children.

Now the last question, and in a sense the most important question. *How to get ready for the second coming of Christ.* Honestly? We can't. What can we do to be ready to meet the holy God, who is coming to purify His creation?

What could we do? Can we change our hearts? Can we change wrong things and harm that we have done to others? To erase the consequences? There is nothing that we can do. And ... the good news is - this is not our task.

This is Christ's task. This is why He came. Because there was nothing that we could do to save ourselves from sin, death and God's purifying holiness. Jesus came to do what we can't do.

If there was a slightest possibility that we can make it on our own, Jesus wouldn't have had to die. He came to overcome sin and death. He came to make us ready for the Last Day. That was His job and He accomplished it.

Then He promised to send us the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to be with us forever. When God gives us His Holy Spirit, He closes us in His holiness. His Spirit is what makes us ready for Jesus return.

When Christ will come, when we'll be gathered before God's throne, He will look at you and will see the holiness and purity on Christ, and not your sins anymore. Without the Holy Spirit we stand no chance. No chance at all.

With Him, you have all that you may need. So, how do we get ready for Christ return? We enclose ourselves with the Holy Spirit. Where do we get the Holy Spirit? You know the answer. We receive it when God speaks to us. When He comes to us to bless us.

The Holy Spirit comes to you in the Divine Service, it comes to you when we read, listen, meditate and share what God is speaking to you in His word. The word and the Holy Spirit come together. Where is the word, there is the Spirit. That simple.

Let's remain listening to God, and you will be ready whenever the Bridegroom comes, and you will enter into the feast with Him. Be sure.

Amen.