November 8th, 2026

“Wake, drowsy people!” Matthew 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.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

The parable about the ten virgins. Jesus tells this parable as a part of His teaching on the end times. That is where we live. Closer to Jesus’ glorious return than ever.

Ten virgins set out to wait for the bridegroom so that they could enter with him into the wedding feast. Five were wise, and five were foolish. What was the difference? The wise had taken with them extra oil and the foolish hadn’t. That’s it!

They all fell asleep. Then suddenly the bridegroom comes, the wise ones have enough oil for their lamps and enter the feast, but the foolish ones don’t. Instead, they hear these terrifying words: “**Truly, I say to you, I do not know you**!”

Now, what does this mean and more importantly - what does this mean for us today? One thing that all commentators that I consulted admit is that we know very little about the wedding traditions in those days, therefore, we can’t explain the significance of every detail in this parable.

However, the main message is loud and clear, and that’s what we will focus on today. We will reflect on three things – on **the oil, on the sleep and on the wisdom**. On what is meant by the oil, what is meant by the sleep, and how to be wise.

First, about the oil. The ten virgins can be understood as individual Christians or as different churches. Initially they all set out with good intentions. They wanted to enter the wedding feast together with the bridegroom.

That’s how it usually happens. Both individual Christians and churches set out with that good goal in mind – to enter the wedding feast of the Lamb. We all do. But at the end it will become clear that some were wise and some were foolish.

Some will make it, and some won’t. The difference is about the oil. What is it? It seems that the oil doesn’t refer to one single thing. “Get this, and you are good!” It seems that the oil refers to the entirety of God’s work as He brings us into His embrace.

Now, think about this – how does our God bring us to Himself, how does He reveal Himself and create the bond of trust and mutual love? Yes, by speaking, for He is God who speaks, God of conversation.

He speaks to us through the Bible, when we rightly understand His message. When we understand His will for our lives, we call it - His Law, and His never changing gracious attitude, we call it - His Gospel.

But then He also comes to us through the spoken Word, when called and ordained servants of the Word faithfully deliver to us His message. Also, when we study the Scripture, when Christians gather around the Word, be it at homes, with friends or in congregations, and listen and learn and rejoice in God's wisdom, and when we comfort one another with the Good News of Jesus.

When our God speaks to us, His Word always comes together with His own life-creating Holy Spirit. And of course, He reveals His love and gives us His Spirit, when He feeds us with His precious body and blood in the Sacrament. When we pray for one another, when we care for one another. When we engage with people in our lives, inviting them into the fellowship with the Father and the Son.

See, how abundantly our Lord provides this oil for your flasks! Yes, He does! He Himself comes to you and offers: "Let me fill your flasks with oil until they overflow, and then more... for I want you to enter my wedding feast, I want you with me!"

If we appreciate His gifts and gladly receive them, there is no shortage of this oil, at least not yet. But if we don't appreciate those gifts, if we are like the foolish virgins and do not store this oil, one day we may find ourselves outside the locked door.

You may have heard people saying that it doesn't matter which church you belong to. It is usually spoken as some superior wisdom, as some higher enlightenment. Don't be fooled by such false ideas! For our Lord Jesus teaches the very opposite.

It does matter, and it matters greatly. If you want to enter the feast, you need to gather the oil, you need to gather the gifts of God, and thus you must look for the churches and congregations where there is abundance of those gifts, and not scarcity.

That much about the oil. **What was the next point? The sleep**. And this is something quite disturbing. Jesus tells that at the end *all* those virgins fall asleep. All! What does this mean for Christians or for churches to fall asleep?

I tend to agree with those theologians who say that this characterises the Church's situation today. Christians have fallen asleep, we have fallen asleep, churches have fallen asleep, at least great many of them. What does it mean? Think about this - what are people like before they fall asleep or when they are asleep?

They become drowsy and disinterested in what is happening around them. Are they active? No! Do they care much about anything? No! Perhaps how to get comfier, how to remove anything that may disturb them. Are they passionate about anything? No! Do they feel a sense of urgency, of mission, of purpose? No!

Don't you think that this is a rather fitting description of many churches and many Christians in the West today? Spiritually sleepy, drowsy, fatigued… spiritually indifferent to almost everything. Have you recently met many who are passionate about pure teaching of the Gospel, about faithful proclamation of Biblical message, who are worried and concerned about the spread of false teachings and unbiblical practices?

But we need to realise that only pure teaching of the Gospel comes with the gift of the Holy Spirit and with the presence of the Triune God, that's the oil we spoke about. And every false teaching, every half-truth separates us from our God. Shouldn't we be shaken to our hearts when we hear Biblical truth distorted, shouldn't we stand for the beautiful truth of the saving Gospel as firmly and as passionately as we can?

Have you recently met many who care about what we as Lutheran Christians believe? How many do you know who have recently, or ever read the wonderful fruit of the Reformation, our Book of Concord, or at least parts of it?

Concord means unity of heart, harmony of faith. This book articulates the most beautiful and clear message of the Gospel. That message of the Gospel in 16th century awoke the entire Christendom. It is such a powerful treasure…

Today many prefer to be Christians on their own terms, not as members of Christ's body, the Church. Their oil, if there is any left, is running out. Many still want God's favour and blessings, but without repentance, without turning away from their sins.

Drowsy… fatigued… What about us? It is not a pleasant thing to admit, but this is true for me as well. That first love, that passion to see everyone saved, the urgency to proclaim them the Good News, to guard the truth of the Gospel whatever the cost…

It is not as it used to be. Perhaps many years of fighting against false teachers and unfaithful church leaders have left me fatigued. Perhaps I have less energy, or maybe less love. Please, brothers and sisters, watch out for your pastors! Pray for us!

What about the Great Commission entrusted to us? To make disciples. How many are even interested in learning anything themselves? How many are willing to do at least something to participate in this cosmic venture with the Lord Jesus?

A couple of years ago, I took part in an online conference. One of the speakers was quite an interesting fellow. He had built a business empire and then transferred the ownership to his church. Now they use the profits from these companies to fund new Christian kindergartens and schools and different outreach efforts.

I guess that gave him some right to speak. He said something rather harsh. He said that Christians like to talk about mission. That it makes us feel good. But then, he said, one can easily spot what we truly care about. How? This is how! He said:

"Let me sit in a few meetings and listen to what you are talking about, and then show me where you spend your money, and I will tell you what you truly care about." Then he said: "Too often it is about – just keeping things as they are". I wonder, what would he conclude if he sat in our meetings.

We are hoping and planning to reflect on why we are here and how the Lord may use us for His purposes. The Lord willing we will be able to do it this coming year. I guess that will help us to see what we truly care for.

Which brings us to our last topic. **How to be wise for salvation**? I pray that these reflections would feed into our thinking on why we are here. We are Lutheran Christians; we have such incredible heritage. Undeserved, but entrusted to us.

As you may remember from the sermon a couple weeks ago, the Lutheran Reformation succeeded in waking up the entire Christendom. How did they do that? How did they manage to awake the Church and to reform it? Do you remember the recipe?

It was done in a very simple way – **by teaching and preaching**. The Law and the Gospel. By showing our sin and by proclaiming God's grace. By not compromising God's truth and pure Gospel to please people. By teaching Catechism everywhere; in the Church – in sermons, in Bible Studies, at home, in schools, everywhere… and the Word of God didn't return empty, just as promised.

The Holy Spirit made home in people's hearts, true love was rekindled again and the Church was renewed. Christian souls were filled with rich spiritual food, their flasks overflew with good oil, and the light of their faith shone brightly.

I know that many of you have experienced this in your own lives. The more we understand our sin and God's unconditional grace and forgiveness, the more passionate for Jesus we become, the more confident we are to witness to others, the more joy the Gospel brings to us, and through us to others.

Brothers and sisters, we are the heirs of the faithful Christians who awoke the Christendom once, when it was in deep sleep, and we still have all the gifts of our gracious Lord available also today. Jesus hasn't abandoned us, even as we don't deserve His patience and grace. We may be asleep, but He is vigilant for us.

Our love and passion may have grown cold, but His heart is burning for you as ever. Whenever you turn to Him, He runs to meet you, He throws His arms around you and pours His oil in your flasks until they overflow.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will work mightily among us. That He would disturb our drowsiness, that He would bring us to true repentance and would stir us up to hunger and thirst for the beautiful life-giving Gospel, so that the abundance of His oil makes the lamps of our faith shine even brighter, so that many see it and come to the knowledge of truth.

The bridegroom is coming soon, He is. We are closer to His return than ever and meanwhile He Himself is providing for us the oil. May any foolishness be far from us, so that we are not found wanting. Let us be like those wise virgins, that we can be welcomed to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb that has no end:

"Come in for I do know you, my dear child! Come in, you have been wise!"

Amen.