

## The Foolish And The Wise Virgins In The Parable.

Text: Matt 25:1-13

Suggested Hymns:

489, 487, 358, 320, 491

1) Who The Foolish Virgins Are,  
And Where Their Folly Leads

2) Who The Wise Virgins Are,  
And How Well They Fare

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 25:1-13, <sup>1</sup> *“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. <sup>3</sup> Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

<sup>5</sup> *But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup> “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’*

<sup>7</sup> *Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’*

<sup>10</sup> *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*

<sup>11</sup> *“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ <sup>12</sup> But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup> “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In the parable of our text the Lord Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a marriage as celebrated among the Jews in former days.

The Jewish custom was for the bridegroom to come with his friends to the house of the bride at the appointed time. The bride with her attendant maidens

would wait for him. When he approached, they would all go forth to meet him, singing and dancing, and then the groom would escort his bride in joyful procession to the house of his parents, where the festivities took place, which usually lasted a whole week.

In our parable it is supposed that the groom is somewhere at a distance. The marriage day is fixed, but the exact hour of the groom's arrival is uncertain. He will come in the course of the night, and the bridesmaids, the virgins, are watching for him, holding in their hands the burning lamps.

But he is taking a long time to come. The time drags wearily on. The virgins get drowsy and nod in their sleep. The oil in their lamps is consumed and the lights go out. It gets to be midnight. Suddenly they are startled by the cry: *The bridegroom is coming! The bridegroom is coming!*

They all jump up to trim their lamps so as to have them burning bright. But alas! the oil is burned out. Some of them have oil in special vessels. They fill their lamps and rush forth to meet the groom.

Others had not used this precaution. They had no oil beyond what was in their lamps; and now it was all burned away. They beg for oil, but cannot get it, and while they go to buy oil, the others meet the groom and go with him to the nuptial mansion, and the doors are shut.

After the lapse of some time the belated virgins come to the door, but the groom, not having seen them in the bridal procession, treats them as strangers, and they are refused admission. They had been foolish in not providing themselves with oil, while the other virgins had been wise and were now enjoying the feast.

Let us inquire more into this and consider, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Foolish And The Wise Virgins In The Parable*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Who The Foolish Virgins Are, And Where Their Folly Leads**

Our text begins, <sup>1</sup> *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

The kingdom of heaven is the Church, and in our text the Lord Jesus teaches how the Church appears in this world. The Church itself is holy and without blemish. It is the communion of saints. But in its outward appearance, before the eyes of men, the Church of Jesus Christ is a mixed assembly. Two kinds of people are in the Church. The Lord Jesus likens them to wise and foolish virgins.

Now who are the foolish virgins in the parable? Jesus says, “<sup>3</sup> *Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.*” Their folly was that they did not supply themselves with a sufficient quantity of oil. The oil is the Holy Spirit, who is frequently presented in this way in the Bible. He is called “*the oil of gladness*” in Psalm 45, and in the Acts of the Apostles’ we read that God “*anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.*”<sup>1</sup>

The lamp is the Word of God, which in Psalm 119 is called “*a lamp to my feet.*”<sup>2</sup>

The flame which burns and gives light is faith, for God says in the prophecies of Isaiah that “*smoking flax He will not quench,*”<sup>3</sup> or, that He will not reject a person who is weak in the faith.

Whom, then, do the foolish virgins represent? They represent those Christians who fail to supply themselves with the oil of God’s Holy Spirit, or who do not make provision that their faith may last and endure to the end.

They represent those Christians of whom Jesus says in the parable of the sower that for a while they believe, but in time of temptation they fall away.<sup>4</sup>

They represent the lukewarm Christians with whom religion is a matter of form or habit, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, and whom the Lord denounces in the Book of Revelation with the stern rebuke: “*So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*”<sup>5</sup>

Their great folly is that they take no efforts to keep their spiritual life healthy and active by the renewal of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. They do not seek to grow in grace and in the Spirit. They do not make a diligent use of the means of grace, the Word of God and the sacraments, in order that the Spirit might be renewed in them.

They grow neglectful in their attendance at the house of God, in the reception of the Lord's Supper, in prayer, in reading the Bible; and because they do nothing to retain the Spirit and to be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit must leave them, and, having lost the Holy Spirit, they lose the faith, their light is out, and all they have is an outward form of religion without the reality.

And to where does this folly lead? In the midnight hour when the bridegroom comes, in the hour of death, their souls are shrouded in darkness.

We read, "<sup>5</sup>*But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*" All slumbered and slept, the foolish and the wise. All Christians are sinners. They daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment, as they pass through life, and their faith may dwindle down to a smoking flax.

But those Christians who resemble the foolish virgins have nothing to comfort themselves against sin when the stern hour of death is at hand. The Spirit has gone from them, and they have nothing to revive their faith.

They either pass away trusting in their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags before God,<sup>6</sup> or they sink into utter despair, unless God, in His unlimited mercy, performs a miracle of His grace and snatches them as a brand from the fire.<sup>7</sup>

And there is a special incident mentioned in our text. We read, "<sup>7</sup>*Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.* <sup>8</sup>*And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'* <sup>9</sup>*But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'*"

When Luther was still in the papacy, he was told that, if he went into a convent, he could do so much good that not only he himself could get to heaven, but that a surplus would be left which he could have transferred to his father and mother, so as to help get them from purgatory into heaven.

But here we see how foolish it is to say, '*Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.*' You cannot have the faith and religion of someone else accredited to you. You must believe for your own person; for as Scripture say "*the just shall live by his faith.*"<sup>8</sup>

And finally we are told, *and the door was shut.* <sup>11</sup> *“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’* <sup>12</sup> *But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’”*

O what a terrible doom to which the folly of those people leads, whom the foolish virgins represent in our text! The doors of heaven are shut on them. They are not admitted to the great feast of God and the Lamb.

The Lord does not consider their outward religious profession when they say, *“Lord, Lord!”* He tells them, *“I do not know you,”* and they are cast away forever. May the Lord preserve and keep us all in the faith to our end, so that we escape the fate of the foolish virgins.

## **2. Who The Wise Virgins Are, And How Well They Fare**

But our text also tells of wise virgins, and we shall now consider, in the second place, who the wise virgins are and how well they fare.

Whom do the wise virgins in our parable represent? They represent Christians who take their lamps and go forth to meet their Bridegroom, Christians who rally around the standard of the divine Word, learn the Word, read the Word, hear the Word of God, and go out from the world, making for heaven, setting their affection on the things that are above<sup>2</sup> and expecting Christ to come and to receive them into the heavenly mansions.

They represent Christians who have their lamps burning bright, who make an open profession of the Christian faith, who confess Jesus before others, and are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

But all these things are not yet the distinguishing mark of those Christians whom the wise virgins in the parable represent. A person may confess the name of Jesus with his mouth, and pray, and talk Christianity, and go to church, and walk with the Christians, and tell of his Christian experiences, but, at the same time, be a damnable hypocrite, without a vestige of faith, and with a heart which is alienated from God.

Or he may be a true believer only for a while, and then make shipwreck concerning faith and lose the Holy Spirit who was within him. And what benefit will he have of his Christianity when it is all lost and gone? Was he wise to part with God’s Holy Spirit without whom we are dead in trespasses and sin? No; the

wisdom of the wise virgins is thus set forth: “***4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.***”

That which distinguishes those Christians whom the wise virgins in the parable represent from other so-called Christians is, that they supply themselves with a full measure of the oil of God’s Holy Spirit.

Not only do they confess Christ with the lips, but they do so from honest conviction and from the depth of their soul. Not only do they sincerely believe in the Saviour from sin who has cleansed them from all sin with His holy, precious blood, but they believe in Him with an enduring, persevering faith.

They live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and retain the Spirit, who never leaves them. For God grants them their request when they implore Him and say, as we read in Psalm 51:10–12, ***Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.***

And see how well such Christians fare as they are supplied with an ample measure of the Holy Spirit! Our text says, <sup>6</sup> ***“And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’”*** And when the bridegroom did come, ***“those who were ready went in with him to the wedding.”***

The midnight hour, when the bridegroom comes, is the hour of death. And see how well, in the hour of death, those Christians fare who are well supplied with the oil of the Spirit! ***“They are ready,”*** says our text. They are ready, for the Holy Spirit dwells in them and nourishes the flame of faith, causing their lamps to burn bright.

They can die with joy and say with old Simeon, ***Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation. 11***

And they go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. They meet their divine Lord in whom they have believed, meet Him face to face, and He extends to them His arms, welcoming them to Himself, and leads them into joys and pleasures which no human tongue can express; for ***“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor***

*have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*"<sup>12</sup>

Our text concludes with the words, <sup>13</sup> *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."* This is the lesson which Jesus is teaching us by this parable of the ten virgins.

We should watch for the coming of the Son of man. He may come in the clouds. He may come in death. See that at all times you are prepared to meet Him. See that at all times the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and *"do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*<sup>13</sup>

See that you are not with the foolish virgins who are left outside, but with the wise virgins who go in to the marriage. In short, *"be not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."*<sup>14</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 10:38

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:105

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 42:3

<sup>4</sup> Luke 8:13, the ones on the rock

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 3:16

<sup>6</sup> Isa 64:6

<sup>7</sup> Zechariah 3:2

<sup>8</sup> Hab 2:4

<sup>9</sup> Col 3:1-2

<sup>10</sup> Rom 1:16

<sup>11</sup> Luke 2:29-30

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 4:30

<sup>14</sup> Hebrews 10:39