

Text: Matthew 25:1-13

Theme: Lord Keep Us Watchful for Our Triumph!

There is a story that is told about a boy who was sent out to a field to watch over a flock of sheep. The boy quickly became bored, so to add some excitement he yelled out, “Wolf! Wolf!” When those in the town heard him crying out, they ran to the field, only to find out that there was no wolf threatening to eat the sheep. This went on for days. The boy would cry out “Wolf! Wolf!”, and the town people would come running out to help the boy. Finally, a day came when a wolf actually did show up at the field where the sheep were. So, the boy cried out, “Wolf! Wolf!”, but this time no one came. Everyone in town thought it was just the boy playing his joke again. Finally, some from the town went out to the field, only to find that all the sheep had been eaten.

There are some who accuse us in the Christian Church of crying “Wolf! Wolf!” when we talk about the End Times, and Jesus coming again on the Great Last Day. Already during the very early days of the Church, there were those who accused the followers of Jesus of crying “Wolf!” about his coming again. Jesus’ disciple Peter writes in his second letter, “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”

For almost 2,000 years, the Christian Church has taught the truth found in the Bible that Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will come again as the Judge of all mankind. Again, from Peter’s second letter we are told, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.” Yes, the day of Jesus’ return is coming. It will come at any moment. It will come without any warning. It will be a great day, when Jesus returns in all his glory, along with all the Saints Triumphant who have gone before us. Yet, you and I may be tempted to think that Day will never come. So we pray, “Lord, keep us watchful! LORD, KEEP US WATCHFUL FOR OUR TRIUMPH!”

Just like last week’s Gospel Lesson, today’s reading comes from the time in our Savior’s ministry often referred to as “Busy Tuesday.” Jesus is busy answering questions, teaching his disciples and the crowds around him. He is especially preparing his disciples for his upcoming suffering, death, resurrection and ascension back into heaven. Jesus wants to comfort his disciples that, although soon he will physically leave them, one day he will return in all his glory. He wants them and all his disciples (that includes you and me), to be prepared for that Day when he comes again.

So, Jesus tells the parable that is before us in Matthew chapter 25. Remember the definition of a parable? We define a parable as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” In this parable, our one and only Savior is the bridegroom. The 10 virgins represent all those who either are or are NOT prepared for the bridegroom to come. So, what is the main point, what is the “heavenly meaning” that Jesus wants you and me to take home today from this earthly story of the 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom to arrive? Our Savior himself gives us the answer when he says, “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” When Jesus comes again, all those who are prepared will enjoy the celebration. But, all those who are not prepared will be told, “I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.” They will be forgotten and never welcomed in.

It is important for you and me to remember that left on our own and our own efforts, none of us would be prepared for Jesus' return. Rather than Saints Triumphant, all you and I deserve is to be Sinners Defeated. As you and I listen to the holy and just God condemn us in his Law, you and I know that all we deserve is to hear the Lord say to you and me is, "I don't know you!" and then have him sentence you and me to eternal defeat; to a life that never ends in the flames and torment of hell!

But the good news for you and me to hear is found in our first lesson for today. Through the prophet Isaiah, our loving Lord assures you and me: "You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed." This brings to mind the explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed found in Martin Luther's Small Catechism where he writes that our one and only Savior, Jesus, "has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death."

It is Jesus who came to be your Savior and mine. Jesus lived a perfect life in our place. Jesus suffered and died on the cross, where he gave up his body and shed his blood as the full payment price for your sins and mine. It is God the Holy Spirit who used his powerful Word and placed in your heart and mine faith in Jesus as our one and only Savior. Because Jesus rose in victory on Easter Sunday, you and I are able to pray, "Lord, keep us watchful for our triumph!" As the Lord's disciple Peter writes in the first chapter of his second letter, you and I are able to look forward to our day of triumph when we will "receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

There is one final, very important point for you and me to take home today. How are you and I able to be like the wise virgins in this parable before us? How are you and I able to keep our lamps of faith burning while we watch for our eternal triumph? As we pray, "Lord keep us!", we pray that he would keep us connected to the Means of Grace. It is through the powerful Gospel message found in the pages of the Bible and in the Sacraments that our faith in Jesus as our Savior is created and strengthened. So you and I make use of the times we have to worship our Savior-God and to hear his Word proclaimed; to make use of the wonderful Sacrament of Holy Baptism and to participate in the Lord's Supper for the personal guarantee of the forgiveness of all our sins through the body and blood of our Lord and Savior; to be in his Word on a regular basis, whether here at church or at home. This is how you and I keep watchful for our triumph along with all the Saints Triumphant who will be with us in heaven.

We take a look at the sinful world around us, and there are many things in this life that may cause you and me to have fear or concern. Once again we have heard this weekend that the return of our Savior need not be one of those things. From God's Word this weekend we have heard the Good News that our Savior, Jesus Christ, makes you and me one of the Saints Triumphant. Jesus won the forgiveness of all of your sins. Jesus won your place at his side in heaven. Because of our victorious Savior, you and I are able to look forward to joining in the great victory celebration described in Revelation chapter 7, "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as we look forward to the day of our Savior's glorious return, you and I pray with confidence, "LORD, KEEP US WATCHFUL FOR OUR TRIUMPH!" Amen.