



STORY

The Parable of the Ten Virgins – Matthew 25:1-13

2/2/06

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you have made me wise unto salvation through faith in Your holy Word. Bless my efforts that I may be the instrument through whom the Holy Spirit gives the children in my classroom Your precious saving Word so that they will always be ready for the unknown hour of Your return. In Your saving name, Amen.

VOCABULARY

Parable – An earthly story with a heavenly meaning. A teaching device Jesus used often.

Lamps of oil – This can symbolize for us of the whole work of God the Holy Spirit – that through God's Word He calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in the one true faith. (Luther's explanation to the 3rd Article of the Apostle's Creed)

Bridegroom – Jesus Christ

Wise Virgins – Believers who faithfully persevered in God's Word.

Foolish Virgins – Those who started out as believers, but who did not continue in God's Word and, as a result, fell from faith and were rejected by the Lord.

OUTER AIM

Keep on watching and being ready for the unknown time of Christ's Day of Judgment.

INNER AIM

God's Word will keep us steadfast and ready for Christ's Day of Judgment.

BACKGROUND

In context, chapters 24 and 25 of the Gospel of Matthew deal with the coming of Christ's Day of Judgment. We recite in the Apostle's Creed..."...He will come to judge..." There are two events – the coming and the judging. Chapter 24 of Matthew deals mostly with the coming of Christ, while the 25th chapter deals mostly with the judging. This parable of the Ten Virgins deals with both, but with an emphasis on the Day of Judgment and the results of persevering in the faith or not. Being mindful that parables contain one main point, and we should not make doctrines out of the details, we also recognize that many of our Lutheran forefathers allegorized this parable according to the whole analogy of Scripture. For instance – the "lamp" is every Christian being a light in the world, the "oil" is faith, or the Word of God, etc. While we don't want to make too much of the details of a parable, we also recognize applicable Bible truths that prepare us by faith for the great Day of Judgment by our Savior.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for giving us faith to believe in the forgiveness of sins You have earned for us. Lord, keep our faith steadfast in Your Word so that we keep on watching for Your second coming, and so that on Judgment Day we will be welcomed by You into heaven for the eternal celebration You have prepared for all believers. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The Lord's second coming could happen at any time. He could very well come in our lifetime – our "time of grace." Also, our time of grace is in God's hands and so we may die before Judgment Day comes. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment." So, when our time of grace is over – as you close your eyes in death, the next thing you know you'll be opening your eyes on Judgment Day. Either way, we want God's assurance that Jesus not only is "the Author of our faith" but that He is

also “the Finisher of our faith.” (Heb. 12:12) In this parable, Jesus used the ten virgins to show the results of faithful perseverance to His Word verses unfaithful. Jesus is speaking to all believers and warning the foolish to “wise-up.” The contrast can be compared to

Vs. 1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”

Some have equated the wise and foolish virgins as believers and unbelievers. But the “kingdom of heaven” is Christ’s ongoing ruling activity in our hearts and the hearts of all believers. Jesus is here preaching to His own – they are all believers at the beginning.

Vs.2-5 “Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.”

Using the whole analogy of Scripture, Martin Luther comments: “When the Kingdom is preached, these are the results: Some receive it with all their heart and are serious about , believe the Word, make the most strenuous efforts to practice good works, let their lamps shine before the world; for they are well provided with lamps and oil, that is, with faith and love: these are represented by the wise virgins. Then there are some that also accept the Gospel, but are sleepy, are not serious about it, think they can succeed with their works, are secure, and believe it can be paid for with works; those are indicated in the foolish virgins. In Scripture those are called foolish that do not obey the Word of God, but follow their own mind, will not be taught, accept no opinion but their own. But it will happen to them at last as it here happened to the foolish virgins. These two kinds of people are in this Kingdom, namely, where the Word of God is preached and there should be exercise of faith: some follow, some do not follow...” (Luther, 11, 1925.2407)

Also note, the foolish virgins did not *forget* to bring oil, they took no oil with them. Sleeping is something in which both foolish and wise are involved. One commentator says that this could imply that, although being warned to be watchful and ready, “there is danger at all times that a false sense of security lulls the spiritual senses to sleep.” (Kretzmann p. 139) When the time comes, all are taken by surprise.

Vs.6-10 “And at midnight a cry was heard: `Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, `Give us some of you oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 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.’ 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.”

The midnight cry came to the wise virgins only unexpectedly, but to the foolish virgins also unpreparedly. When asked, the wise virgins refused to share their oil with the foolish virgins. When Judgment Day arrives, there will be no “borrowing” from others what is needed for entrance into heaven.

Luther: “Remember, then, in this Gospel that the lamps without oil signify a mere external thing and a bodily exercise without faith in the heart; but the lamps with oil are the internal riches, also the external works with true faith.”

Conversion is to be coupled with faithful perseverance. All this is given by God through the Means of Grace – the Gospel as it is found in the Word and Sacraments.

Vs.11-13 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”

The bridegroom in the parable took in only those virgins who were prepared to meet him. By the parable, Jesus taught that Christians should have faith and so be prepared to meet Him at all times. With faith we are prepared at all times. Those who lack faith, will have the doors of heaven closed to them. Matthew 7:21-23. Those that watch will receive the LORD and His grace. Those that are secure will find Him a merciless Judge.

APPLICATION

Those who teach this lesson should be very careful not to moralize. Make sure that your children leave the Sunday School room knowing that God has prepared them through faith by the Gospel for His great Day of Judgment. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. That message encourages us to live lives committed steadfastly to Christ by faith.

Our parents, pastors, and teachers faithfully taught us the Word of God in all its truth and purity. “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:15. The Holy Spirit will continue to use His Means of Grace to strengthen us to “fight the good fight” of our Christian lives, that we may finally “lay hold on eternal life.” 1 Timothy 6:12.

If we are to be watchful at all times, then we should talk about distractions and ways to prevent them. What hinders us from things spiritual?

How does Jesus recognize us? John 10:11ff. John 8:47, “He who is of God, hears God’s Word.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Matt. 24:42 - Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

Matt. 24:44 - So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.

Matt 26:41 - Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak

Matt 7: 21 - Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

HYMN CHOICES

Great God, What Do I See and Hear! - TLH #604

The World Is Very Evil - TLH #605

Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying - TLH #609

And Will The Judgment Descend - TLH #610