

## Watch For When The Judge Comes.

Text: Matt 25:1-13

Suggested Hymns:

491, 543, 487, 489, 445

1) A Warning

2) A Challenge

3) A Promise

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,

Today the church reminds her people to be prepared for the day when the Master Hand will pull down the final curtain on the stage of history. It is called the Day of the Lord, the Last Day, or Judgement Day.

The conviction that this day is indeed coming is woven firmly into the message of the Bible and into the fabric of faith which we confess. The word of

the Lord Jesus which describes our spiritual attitude toward this day is watch, that is, to be on the alert, be on your tiptoes, and know what to do. Over 20 times in the New Testament the people of God are urged to watch.

Each time we recite the Apostles' Creed, we say, "*He will come to judge the living and the dead.*" There are two distinct events in that phrase: He will come and He will judge. One way to look at the relationship between Matthew chapter 24 and chapter 25 is to see Christ's coming in chapter 24 and the final judgement in chapter 25.

First, Jesus gives us the signs to look for, so we can be ready for His return. Then He separates the wise virgins from the foolish virgins, the faithful servants from the unfaithful servants, and the sheep from the goats.

In our text today we have a warning, a challenge, and a promise. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. A Warning.**

Watch is a warning against unpreparedness. Five foolish virgins were not prepared to meet the bridegroom. They did not have enough oil in their lamps. They were too late to the marriage feast. The door was shut.

Then was heard their frantic cry, '*Lord, Lord, open to us!*' And from inside the strong voice of separating judgement, '*Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.*' Although we may not like it, there comes a time when it is too late.

Pastor Martin Niemoeller said that when the Nazis came for the communists, I did not speak up because I was not a communist; when they came for the Jews, I did not speak up because I was not a Jew; when they came for the trade unionists, I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist; when they came for the Catholics, I did not speak up because I was a Protestant. And then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for anyone.

There comes a time when it is too late. Parents who do not give their children adequate love when they are little, will find there comes a time when it is just too late.

Students who are consistently unprepared will find there comes a time when it is just too late. People who are always putting off the good deeds till tomorrow which they should do today will find there comes a time when it is just too late.

Members of the church who are content only with the name Christian or Lutheran and are not genuine inside will find there comes a time when it is just too late. Individuals who put off their commitment to the Lord Jesus to a more convenient time will find there comes a time when it is just too late.

The world has outgrown the idea that history moves on to a decisive day when everyone must stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Jesus says that His return to judgement will be as the days before the flood.

We read in Matthew 24:37–39, <sup>37</sup> *But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.* <sup>38</sup> *For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,* <sup>39</sup> *and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

The time of Jesus' coming will be deceptively normal. It will be a time when there will be no next time, when it is too late, when the door will be shut. To be sure, the fact that some will be in and others out, some saved, others lost, is not a happy thought.

But it is as sure as God's Word, of which Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, <sup>35</sup> *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.* Watch therefore!

## 2. A Challenge

Watch is a challenge to be genuine in faith and life. The important question is not "when is the Last Day coming?"

There are those like Hal Lindsey, author of the best seller *The Late Great Planet Earth*, who ignore the plain passages of the New Testament and instead try to interpret the very difficult prophecies in Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation and apply them to specific events in history, such as establishment of Israel as a nation, European common market, and alliance of Russia and the Arab world against Israel.

They say that we must still wait for rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, then the end will come.

In contrast to that, Jesus says in Matthew 25:13, <sup>13</sup> *“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”*

The important question is not when is the Last Day coming, but how can I be prepared for it when it does come.

Some years ago there was a show at a Planetarium entitled “*End of the World.*” It showed the various scientific possibilities by which the world would come to an end. The last scene has a family on top of the planetarium. The sky is fiery red. All is quiet.

Then the announcer said, “*Somehow our thoughts turn to spiritual things.*”

But why do we wait so long? St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:2, ***Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*** Now is the time to lay open your life before God in confession of your sins as we read in 1 John 1:9, <sup>9</sup>*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Now is the time to hang on to the love of God. <sup>16</sup>***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***<sup>1</sup>

Now is the time to show that your faith is genuine in works of love as we read in Matthew 25:40, <sup>40</sup>***And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’***

John Ruskin wrote: “*No nation ever had or will have the power of suddenly developing under the pressure of necessity faculties it had neglected when it was at ease.*”

My last hour is much less important than my whole life. Today is the first day of the rest of my life. Watch therefore!

### 3. A Promise

Watch implies a promise that will be fulfilled. If we are genuine Christians we may be a little afraid of meeting God face to face. We should not worry about it, but we should rejoice in it.

Jesus’ words about the Last Day are set into joyful context of the marriage feast. He comes to take His bride, the church, of which we are a part, into everlasting glory. We read in Matthew 25:34, <sup>34</sup>***Then the King will say to those***

***on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.***

God has not made our life like a detective story with an uncertain ending. Already at Baptism He has revealed what the end will be. We are to be forever with the Lord. My life lived in this hope becomes an adventure.

Although the waters are rough I know that I will reach the harbour. Although the road is crooked I know it will end at the Father’s house. The operation I may be facing, the crisis I feel coming, the examination ahead of me, the trouble I am having with my parent, child, spouse, frustrations of life, sickness, poverty, loneliness, war, or death — I need not fear.

They may be a part of the rough waters and crooked road but they have no lasting hold on me.

Peter Marshall relates a story of a mother telling her little child about death. The son asked, *“What is it like to die? Does it hurt?”* The mother replied, *“Remember when you were little, you liked to crawl into your big brother’s bed? And around midnight big loving hands would carry you into your own bed. You would wake up in your own room. That is what death is, waking up in your own room.”*

The story of life, yours and mine, each one is so different, it can be so exciting as you watch God write it so we wind up at the goal already assured.

We heard in the Epistle for today, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, ***9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.***

The last verse of our Epistle lesson reads, ***11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.***

Through St. Paul God wants us to encourage one another with the Gospel. By speaking about the purpose of Christ’s death, we are preparing one another for Christ’s return. This also uplifts our fellow believers in their troubles. He urges us to do it even more.

Surely as members of a Christian congregation, we treasure the family of fellow believers with which God has blessed us. What a joy it is to gather for

worship and encourage one another in our faith! We study the message of Christ our Saviour.

Together we sing the words of the liturgy and hymns. We pray for one another. What a comfort in time of bereavement to have this spiritual family! They remind us of the hope that is ours even as we lay into a grave the body of a loved one who has fallen asleep in Christ!

But members of a family do not only speak to one another when they are gathered as a group. They also do a lot of one-on-one speaking. Twice<sup>2</sup> in this section Paul urges us to do the same as members of a spiritual family. To encourage one another and build each other up. We have such a glorious comfort to share. We share the hope of our Lord's coming and we need to remind one another of this hope, lest we fall asleep and be caught unprepared!

Therefore, let us wait expectantly for Christ's return. Luther, in looking forward to the great Judgement Day, said: *"Let us rejoice in this coming day and let us say, 'Winter has lasted long enough, beautiful summer once more will come, a summer which shall never end, a summer in which not only all the saints rejoice but all the angels as well, a summer for which all creatures wait and sigh, an eternal summer in which all things are made new.'"*

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>3</sup>

Rejoice, rejoice, believers,  
And let your lights appear;  
The evening is advancing,  
And darker night is near.  
The bridegroom is arising  
And soon He draweth nigh;  
Up, pray and watch and wrestle,  
At midnight comes the cry. Amen.

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

---

<sup>1</sup> John 3:16

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:11

<sup>3</sup> Hymn 489