

How do you tell a wise virgin from a foolish virgin? Just by asking someone: Which one are you? That will probably not work. In Proverbs we read: “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.*” In other words, “The way of a fool is wise in his own eyes.” Fools think they are wise. Is there anyone here who admits that you are a fool? Does this prove that we are all wise virgins?

I will say this – you are wise for being here. The wise virgins took extra oil with their lamps. Is this not why you are here this morning? You are filling up your flasks with oil. You do not know when the Bridegroom will come. You know He will come. You know that when He comes, that’s it. It’s the end. No more reading the Bible. No more going to church to hear the good news of Jesus. No more coming up to the Lord’s Table to be nourished with Jesus’ body and blood. No more repenting of your sins and receiving the word of forgiveness. All of these are here now. But all of these will come to an end when Jesus, the Bridegroom, comes.

A Christian is wise, therefore, who makes full use of these resources now before the coming of the Bridegroom; who is in the habit of filling up their flask with oil.

Now, the foolish virgins in our text would not have been foolish virgins except for this one thing: the bridegroom was delayed. Had the bridegroom not been delayed in coming, their lamps would have had enough oil to stay lit.

These five were not scoundrels. They were not thieves and just plain horrible people. These five, along with the five wise virgins, had lamps. And they had oil in their lamps. These were not the pagan unbelievers out in the world. These five, who end up being foolish, were your everyday, basic Christian people. They just lacked one thing. They did not fill up their flasks with oil to bring with their lamps.

And so, whose fault is it that they were locked out of the wedding feast? Maybe it’s the fault of the bridegroom. Had he been on time, these five would have joined the other five in the wedding feast. But no, it’s their fault. They did not honor the bridegroom by being prepared in case he was delayed.

Here, therefore, is what Jesus’ parable teaches us: you cannot get ready for the Bridegroom to come; you must be ready for Him to come.

To get ready is the mark of a foolish virgin. To be ready is the mark of a wise virgin. Any Christian who thinks he will have time to get ready for Jesus to come in the end is a fool. Fools do not make full use of the resources God provides now. They are not in the habit of continuing to fill their flasks with oil, because they think they can get ready.

But no. And so, again I say, you are wise for being here today. Here are the resources God provides for you to be ready. Here is the preaching of the Gospel. Here is the body and blood of Jesus for you. Here is the word of forgiveness for you. Here God fills up your flasks with oil.

And so, would you say that you are a wise virgin? Foolish virgins think they are wise. But wise virgins bemoan their foolishness. We would say that the Apostle Paul was a wise virgin, wouldn't we? But did he claim this of himself? Did he say, "How good and wise I am"? No! "*Wretched man that I am!*" This is what he bemoaned.

A wise virgin is very much aware of all the foolishness in his or her life. But also this – the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom, is very much a part of the life of a wise virgin.

Wise virgins know that in the end, the cry will come: "*Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!*" But they also hear this same cry, and respond to it, Sunday after Sunday. Every time the church bells ring, wise virgins know that this is the cry: "Here is the Bridegroom! Here in the Divine Service is Jesus for you. Come to meet Him!" And they do. Yet not because they are so good and wise. No. It's all by God's grace.

You know your foolishness as I know mine. And fools we would be were it not that God leads us to the Bridegroom again and again and again. You are not fools who think you are wise. Not when you come here to meet the Bridegroom for the forgiveness of your sins. And forgive your sins He does. For this Bridegroom is He who hung upon the cross. This Bridegroom is He whose blood was shed for every sin, every sinner. Yes, for you. For your sins.

This Bridegroom comes to meet you now, so that you will rejoice to meet Him in the end. This Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, comes now to you, yes you, with mercy, with forgiveness for your sins. And no matter how foolish you have been, He forgives you. He truly does.

And believing this, you rejoice. For when the cry will come at midnight: "*Behold the Bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!*" you will not meet Him in the dark behind the door that is locked. You will meet Him in the light, with your lamp burning, because He, your Lord Jesus, has made you wise unto salvation. Amen.