

## Matthew 25:1-13

The day is coming when heaven's door will be shut. And once it is shut, it will not be opened ever again. Where will you be, and where will I be, when the door is shut? Inside, we hope. If this is our hope, what are we doing right now to make this hope certain? We can, you know. We can live in such a way right now that we make certain our place within heaven when the door is shut. Those who do this, Jesus calls wise; everyone else He calls a moron. Yes, I know the word He uses in the parable is *foolish*. But the word for foolish in the Greek here is where we get our English word *moron*. Fool, stupid, moron, unwise...take your pick. These are the ones who are living in such a way that they will be locked out when heaven's door is shut.

And these, my friends, are not out there; these morons are in here. Not in this building, so to speak; in the church; among those who are counted as church members. Because in the parable, these five foolish virgins have lamps of faith. All ten do because they are the bridesmaids of Christ. That lowlife scum who killed those twenty-six people in Texas last Sunday while they were worshipping - he's not one of the five foolish virgins in the parable. He's not mentioned in the parable. Those unbelievers who worship their god by whatever name they call him - they're not in this parable. This parable is called the Parable of the Ten Virgins. All ten have lamps of faith.

These ten virgins are the baptized. They're you and me. McKenna and Molly are now in this parable because they now have lamps of faith by the grace of God. This parable has nothing to say about the vast majority of people in our world who are not Christians. This parable is about us who are Christians; who are in the church, not outside the church. And in our little group of Christians there are wise virgins and there are virgins who are fools. And for those of us who are living like one of these, this parable is our wake-up call.

It's November. The world around us is dying. The days are getting shorter. Lawns, leaves, flowers are in their last stages. This is a reminder to us, a warning, that our world will come to an end. There are wise creatures in our world. Squirrels, for example, are storing up nuts for winter. But what are God's people doing? Way too many of them live as if winter is not coming; as if this world will not pass away; as if Jesus will not return to judge the living and the dead. Here's how He puts it in His parable: they are not taking along extra oil for their lamps of faith.

Your lamp will not get you into heaven. Oh but we think it will! We think our knowledge of Jesus is good enough. We think the faith we have right now is all we will ever need. That's what the five foolish virgins thought, that the oil they had in their lamp was all they would need. They were wrong.

It's not what they knew. They knew Jesus as their Lord. "*Lord, Lord,*" they cried, "*Open to us!*" Knowing Jesus did not help them because Jesus did not know them. "*Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.*" Your lamp is not going to help you on the Last Day. It did not help the five foolish virgins. To enter into heaven Jesus must know us. Does He know you?

He knows McKenna and Molly. Today in the washing of Holy Baptism these precious little ones became Jesus' sheep. "*I know My sheep...*" says Jesus. "*My sheep hear My voice...and I give them eternal life.*" Your task, George and Sarah, is given to you by God. He gave you your beautiful daughters. He commanded you to bring them to Him in Holy Baptism. This you have done. Now He commands you, and just as vital, that you teach them to hear and love the voice of Jesus. That is the oil for their lamps. "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them.*" Jesus knows us through our hearing His voice.

There is no sweeter voice than Jesus'. He calls us, He invites us, He gathers us, and makes us His own because nothing is more precious to Him than you. He speaks tenderly to you. Even more tenderly and sweetly than George has been speaking to McKenna and Molly, and you know how tender and sweet that has been.

Jesus gave you your lamp of faith in your baptism. He called you out of the unbelieving world and made you a dear member of His own family. And within His family, He speaks with love to all His children.

Why wouldn't a dear, loved, child of Jesus want to listen eagerly to His tender voice? It's because foolishness dwells in all of us, even within those who are wise. Even the wise virgins fell asleep. But at least they were wise enough to stock up on oil for their lamps.

Jesus speaks this parable as a warning, not to them out there in the world, but to us who are His dear children. And it's because He loves us. If He did not love us, He would not warn us. He wouldn't care where we ended up when heaven's door is shut. But He does care. He cares for you, my friend.

There are ten virgins in the parable. They end up in different places; five within heaven's door, five locked out of heaven's door. But they are not at all different in this - they are loved by Jesus. He does not love those who are wise more than those who are foolish. He did not come to rescue from sin and hell only those who are wise. He died on the cross for all sinners, wise ones and unwise. He died even for those outside the church. That was us at one time. But Jesus brought us in. We did not deserve it. It was pure grace and love that moved Him to call you and me into His church. Your lamp is no accident. Jesus desired to give it to you. And He desires to fill it with oil. He's doing that right now as you hear His words of life; as you come up for His body and blood in His Sacrament.

But even though He pours out His love upon us, some of us live foolishly. We do not respond to His love. We do not come running to hear His voice. We do not eagerly gather at His table of grace. Thus we are not storing up oil for our lamps.

On the Last Day most people will be locked out of heaven's door. But not all of them will be fools. Only those are fools who are, who were, the bridesmaids of Christ. A pagan unbeliever, on that day, will say to one of these foolish virgins: "What! You mean to tell me that you were raised in a Christian home? That you were taught the love of Jesus? That you knew that Jesus suffered, died, and rose again for you? And yet you did not grab hold of that? You neglected your salvation? You put other things before Christ? You're a moron...a fool! Had I been raised in a Christian home, taught the love of God, knew what He did to save me through the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary, I would have eagerly listened to His words at every opportunity! I would have come running to His Sacrament every time it was offered! I would never have put life ahead of my Lord Jesus Christ! I'm not the fool; you are. You had every opportunity to store up oil for your lamp, but you didn't do it! I never even had a lamp. And yet here you are with me, locked out of heaven for all eternity!"

That, my friend, is not the conversation God wants you to hear on the Last Day. He loves you too much to lose you. I cannot make you, or anyone, wise. I can't even make myself wise. But God can and does. Every day He turns foolish virgins into wise ones. That day is today. His all-embracing love is here today.

He knows how foolishly you and I have lived. He is not rejecting you and me for it. He forgives. He forgives every one of you. Yes, Jesus took your foolishness and mine to the cross. He became the moron for our sake. He looked every bit the fool dying for sinners like us. But what was foolishness in the eyes of the world is the wisdom of God and the love of God.

Those of us who are Jesus' sheep will answer His wake-up call. We will hear His voice, and keep hearing it, because Jesus' sheep love that tender voice. Let none of us live as morons. This is not the life to which we are called. Let all of us prove to be Jesus' sheep today, every day, and then also on the Last Day when He will lead us into the door of heaven. Amen.