**To The Marriage Feast**

**Matthew 25:1-13**

Last Sunday of Church Year

11.21.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

(portions of this sermon are paraphrased from Robert Farar Capon’s book, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment.*)

OK, I want to role play for a bit. Close your eyes for a moment and let me pain the picture for you. There’s going to be a wedding and you are one of the girls selected to be in the wedding party. All ten of you are just out of high school, having graduated last June. You have already passed the danger of being passed over in the selection process, it was all over Facebook, you are one of the bridesmaids. The worry and concern is past, it is now time to party!

But five were foolish and five were wise. The foolish actually represent the wisdom of the world – the live-by-what-you-see wisdom which God has made foolish. On the other hand, the wise actually are trusting the foolishness of God – the wisdom of living by the reality of the party which the Bridegroom, God, has invited all of creation to attend.

Both sets of girls have all that they need for life in the world now, they share in all the goods and ills of the world. The wise though, have the faith that will get them through their lives in God’s grace, with the Bridegroom who is presently unable to be seen and completely known.

When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them. They lived life as normal. They are content and happy, assuming that luck will continue to treat them well. They do not need to make any effort to deal with the unexpected. They have always had all that they need, they believe they do not need to be prepared for that which is not going to happen, at least not today.

But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

Jesus sets things on edge here. The foolish girls were invited to a wedding, they only needed enough oil in their lamps for the evening, so they filled the lamps and went. The wise however were carrying gallon Clorox jugs full of lamp oil with them, as well as their full lamps. Isn’t that a bit excessive? Why drag the excess along? Why prepare for something so unexpected as needing extra oil?

The foolish girls are wise enough, aren’t they, they have full lamps? The wise are over prepared prudes, preoccupied with what might go wrong rather than simply enjoying the moment.

The thing is, things go wrong.

In this world things always go wrong. We need to be prepared for the unexpected. The Bridegroom did not get there as expected though. The bridegroom was delayed. They all became drowsy and slept. The girls all giggled themselves to sleep at the slumber party before the big day. Can you hear the stories they told with the lamps all light that night – who is pregnant, and how they could never go to their parents with such a story; who didn’t get into the college they wanted; who broke up with who; and finally they all fall asleep on couches and stretched out on the floor.

But at “oh-my-goodness-what-time-it-o’clock” in the wee hours of the morning there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' That’s right, the unexpected happened.

Whose fault is it that the foolish girls ran out of oil? Isn’t it the Bridegroom’s? If He would have showed up on time, they had enough oil. We all like to blame God, don’t we? Who was it that went to the cross? Who died for who? Who was all invited to the wedding?

You know what, there is the phrase, “Here is the bridegroom!” That is the cry every year of the last Sunday of the church year. In fact, it is basically the cry of the last three Sundays. It is also the cry of Advent. It is the cry that begins every church year and the cry that ends every church year.

In fact, it is the watchword that encompasses the whole church year.

Consider that God does deliver on His promise to bring all to Himself. He has reconciled all to Himself with the work He accomplished on the cross – it is ours no matter what our sins might be. Consider Peter, consider Judas, all were brought by Jesus into His closest circle by the voice of His calling. All we need to do is trust that reconciliation, He has called us too be a part of the wedding party, He wants us at the marriage feast. Are we ready when it happens?

Some note that the wise virgins are kind of snotty in their response to the five foolish asking for some oil when they say, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' Let’s face it, everybody knows that the oil dealers closed shop somewhere between 4:00 and 6:00pm last night. Why wouldn’t they share?

That is the point, isn’t it, one day time will run out. It will be too late to believe. Nobody gets away with saying, “Maybe,” or “Later,” to faith forever.

All the girls with their Clorox bottles, all the neurotics of faith, all the wise fools of Jesus were willing to trust Him, the ones who were close-minded and said, “We go to worship every week” to have their faith strengthened, were the ones who went into the party.

Notice what Jesus says to those outside. He does not say: I never called you. He does not tell them, I never loved you. He does not even say, I never drew you to myself.

What He says is, “I never knew you.” Why? Because they never bothered to know Him.

The marriage feast is before us. Right now we are filling the bleach bottles with oil when we gather together to receive God’s gifts. Jesus say, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” We watch by gathering to hear of sins forgiven. We are bridesmaids because we have been invited to be such – not because we are better, brighter, prettier, or anything else. We are bridesmaids because of God’s grace.

## We could be all worried about stuff, we could get nervous about not knowing the day or the hour, but why? We are waiting for a party, the marriage feast. Think about how that works. While the guests wait for the bridal party to show up, the feast already begins – hors d'oeuvres, wine, all sorts of goodies are happening – they are brought out for people to eat and drink and enjoy.

And while we wait, attendants keep bringing out the feast – pastors bring out the things of God’s marriage – we eat and drink, we have a foretaste of the feast to come, we partake of the goodness of the Lord. To the marriage feast we come each and every week.

Yes, we need to watch for Him. But we watch for him because it would be such a pity to miss all the fun to which we have already been invited. Amen.