

## “Do Our Hearts Burn For Jesus’ Return?”

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

Everyone loves a wedding! Weddings in Jesus’ time sometimes ran for seven days. Can you even imagine what kind of party that was?! Let’s take a look at the scene in the Gospel story: the whole town is invited to the celebration; after the exchange of vows, the bridegroom would leave and go to prepare a place for his bride.

The bridesmaid's job was to attend to the bride while he was away and then escort the happy couple to start their life together at the place he had prepared for her. So everyone is waiting for the bridegroom to return. Since there is no scheduled time for the bridegroom's return, the five wise bridesmaids bring flasks of extra oil but the five foolish ones do not. We hear that the bridegroom is long-delayed and all the bridesmaids fall asleep. But they awake in the middle of the night hearing the crowds rejoicing that the bridegroom is on his way back.

The wise bridesmaids' lamps are burning brightly while the foolish bridesmaids' lamps are running out of oil. While the foolish go off to purchase more oil, the wise bridesmaids see the bridegroom, eagerly run to him, enthusiastically greet him, and immediately enter the wedding feast with him.

The story turns tragic for the unprepared when "the door to the wedding hall is locked". The foolish bridesmaids return to find the doors locked and cry out 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' The reply is one of the most devastating lines in all of Scripture, saying: 'I do not know you.' This is a sad ending for the unprepared foolish bridesmaids.

So in this parable the wedding is the kingdom of God, the bridegroom is Jesus, the bride is the Church, and we are the bridesmaids. Our lamps represent our lives burning with the love of God. The bridesmaids' fate

illustrates the two possible destinies that await us. If we are found ready to greet Jesus upon his return, then we will be judged worthy to be in heaven. If we are found NOT ready, then we will be judged unfit to join God in heaven.

We must learn from their bad example. Are we easily distracted from God because of our over-attachment to earthly things? Are there times when we are spiritually asleep? Are we generally prepared for when Jesus' arrival is close at hand? Or will he find us spiritually absent when he finally comes to usher us into heaven?

On the other hand, there is a happy ending for the prepared wise bridesmaids. They reasonably anticipated the delay in the bridegroom's return yet remained confident that he would come back. They had no need to panic at the last minute; they could rest peacefully knowing they were ready for his eventual arrival. They knew that the decision to be a disciple is a deeply personal one and they took full responsibility for their own lives, decisions, and actions of faith.

The wise bridesmaids' behavior might help us ask: Even though Jesus' return seems to be delayed, how confident are we of his return? Are we actively preparing for Jesus' return? Do we pray for it? Do we hope it will happen sooner rather than later? Which of our actions make us ready for Jesus' judgment? Which behaviors make us unprepared for heaven? If there are areas to improve on, then do we seek to change them?

So we all love a party. None of us want to be locked outside. Ask yourself...are you prepared? Does your life burn with the love of God? Are you going to keep watch for his return and celebrate with him inside the gates of heaven? Let's not be like those who hear the words, "I do not know you." Rather, let's be the ones who hear God say, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Come and share your master's happiness!" Because everyone loves a party!