

## **“Who Re-Moved My Oil and Life?!....and where is that Cheese?”**

**23 Pentecost A – Nov. 8 2020**

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Matthew 25:1-13

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The readings appointed for the Sundays in November deal with the end: the conclusion of the liturgical year, one's own death, the end of the earth as we know it, and even the "dying" of vegetation around those of us who live in the northern hemisphere. At the end of everything is God, and in the readings, we encounter this God already arriving for us, with the promised feast begun in our meal of bread and wine.

For millennia humans have told disaster stories about the end. Yet Christians also see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ already the end of the old and the beginning of the new. Thus, we are already the bridesmaids who enjoy the feast, for when praying in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46), Jesus kept awake for us.

Matthew 25, the chapter before Matthew's passion narrative begins, includes 3 parables that deal symbolically with the end time. Only Matthew tells the bridesmaids' parable, and its sad conclusion evidences Matthew's call for all individuals to live the perfect (completely aware) life. The New Testament records Jesus as preaching the imminent arrival of the eschaton, the new time at the end of this time, and the use of the wedding imagery suggests joy and fulfillment, not dread or sorrow, as our response to the end of this world and the coming of God. These Matthean parables have often been turned into allegories or literalized. However, it is unlikely that Jesus or Matthew advocated our ignoring the requests of others.

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Many divorced couples conclude the marriage was over long before the papers were finalized; many families of late Alzheimer's patients say their loved one was gone before their body actually died; many folks who leave a job look back and realize they should have left a long time before they actually did. What are you thinking the eschaton – the end of this world- will be or look like? And Are you surprised to learn it was actually already initiated with Jesus' Resurrection? The beginning of the end has already started; life can be and is meant to be qualitatively different. Living in a new reality of hope even in the midst of hopelessness, certainty even in unreliable times and leaning into a relationship of Ultimate Love and Justice instead of relationships that as wonderful as they can be....remain somehow just a bit unfulfilling, fragile and sometimes even a burden. This is the new reality Jesus brings into possibility in a more concrete and achievable way. It is a new day, a new life, a new hope. How does knowing this, living into this and relying on it everyday change who you are and how you may be able to live?

How – just one way - will you allow God's Holy Spirit to change your understandings to reflect this new reality that you have already received the sought-after invitation to Heaven's Banquet--- your seat is secure and you can celebrate that even now....letting go of the intensity of the burdensome anxieties of today or tomorrow; living with more confidence that you are deeply loved and claimed just as you are as one of God's children and that you can live with an awareness of the abundance of God's blessings today and the inheritance of an eternal Promise instead of having a scarcity mentality that there will never be quite enough for you unless you gather, protect, invest and secure your prosperity? And how will you live into that new reality?