"The Heavenly Bridegroom Is Coming!"
(Matthew 25:1-13 – Saints Triumphant – November 15, 2026)

Matthew 25:1-13 – *[1]Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. [2]Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. [3]Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, [4]but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. [5]But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. [6]And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' [7]Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. [8]And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [9]But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' [10]And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. [11]Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' [12]But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' [13]Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*

Dear Redeemed in Christ, who are joined to the Bridegroom of the Church by faith:

In order to picture the events in Jesus' parable, we need to understand the practice of marriage in that time. According to Jewish custom, a man and woman were betrothed by the arrangement of their parents. It was not like our modern-day engagement, where a man and woman promise to get married at a future date. Jewish betrothal legally bound them as man and wife. Yet they did not yet live together under the same roof and consummate marriage until later – perhaps days, weeks, or months later.

Then at the appointed time on a certain evening, the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, would come in festive procession from his house or his father's house to the home of his bride. The bride with her attendant maidens would be waiting for him. When he approached, they would all come forward with their lamps lighted, ready to meet him. Then the groom would escort his bride and all the wedding party in joyful procession to his home, where the wedding banquet and festivities took place, often lasting seven days.

Scripture describes Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride. His Bride represents all believers, whom He cleanses of sin and presents holy and beautiful in His sight by Baptism and faith (Ephesians 5:22-33). So we are made ready and eagerly await His coming (Revelation 19:7). What a joyful procession it will be when Jesus comes at the appointed time, to escort us into His Father's house for the heavenly wedding banquet!

In light of Jesus' parable, our message of preparation says: **"The Heavenly Bridegroom Is Coming!" 1) Do not be like the foolish virgins who are unprepared to meet Him; 2) Be like the wise virgins who are ready to join His triumphal procession.**

1) Do not be like the foolish virgins who are unprepared to meet Him

By the parable, Jesus compares two kinds of people who await His coming: *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps"* (vs. 1-4).

In order to keep these lamps burning, it was necessary to replenish the oil regularly. Since the bridesmaids did not know the hour of evening when the bridegroom would come, it would have been foolish not to take oil along. No Jewish maiden would want to let her oil burn out and meet the bridegroom in darkness, unprepared to join his festive procession! The wise virgins took along a supply of oil in jars, to make sure they were ready. But since the foolish virgins lacked the oil that would have kept their lamps burning, they were not ready to join the procession with the bride and groom and to enter his wedding banquet.

What is Jesus picturing by the oil? What do we need in order to be ready to meet Him and enter His heavenly banquet? Jesus gives the answer in John 3:16, 18: *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life… He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* In order to enter eternal life in His Kingdom, we must believe in Jesus as the only Son of God and our Savior. So the oil in the burning lamps refers to saving faith in Jesus.

Notice that all ten virgins waited for the bridegroom. All appeared ready. Jesus is saying that a certain number of people appear to have faith and be ready to meet Him. Yet when He comes, it will be revealed that they are like the foolish virgins whose oil ran out.

Perhaps some never had true faith at all. They may have joined the outward ranks of believers in the church, but they were members in name only. Maybe they had head knowledge about Jesus and His teachings, but they did not take His salvation to heart. They did not really trust that He died on the cross for their sins and rose again, as the only way to save them from judgment and eternal death. Instead of trusting Jesus' righteousness alone to clothe them, they trusted their own goodness and virtue to adorn them. They lacked the oil of true faith.

Or perhaps others once did have true faith, even a fervently burning faith in Jesus. But for one reason or another, it burned out. Maybe they began to make a greater priority of worldly gain and pleasure, and they neglected Jesus' call to His banquet of salvation in Word and Sacrament. By depriving their souls of these means of grace by which He strengthens faith, their oil ran out. There was no more flame produced by the Holy Spirit

in their heart. You may tell them about the importance of being in God's Word, you may warn them in Christian love about straying in sinful paths. But instead of showing fruits of repentance and faith, they take offense and insist that Jesus accepts them as they are.

Maybe it happened unnoticeably, even though they were in church regularly. Though they attended Jesus' banquet of salvation, their hearts gradually grew lukewarm and then cold toward Him. They no longer came because they felt a need to hear His forgiveness. Receiving the Sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood became a mere procession in which they went along with the crowd.

In any case, Jesus is saying their religion is like lamps without oil. They have an outward form of godliness but deny its power (2 Timothy 3:5). They may still mouth words of faith about Jesus, but their hearts are far from Him (Matthew 15:8). Like the foolish virgins holding lamps, they may think they are ready to meet the Bridegroom, but they are not.

"At midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out'" (vs. 6-8). The foolish virgins now see that their lamps, their outward forms of religion, are empty. They were not truly ready to meet the Bridegroom. Though they had thought they stood in good faith with the Bride, ready to join the festive procession, they find themselves standing shamefully in the darkness of their sin. At this point, they have nothing to revive the flame of true faith in Jesus.

Terrified, they beg oil from the wise virgins. But the latter respond: *"No, lest there should not be enough for us and you."* In the hour when Christ comes, it will do no good to plead entrance into the heavenly banquet by connection to others who have faith. It will do no good to plead, "My family and I were always church members." Faith in Jesus as your Savior is personal; no one else can possess faith for you. This is why the wise virgins tell the foolish ones: *"But go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves"* (vs. 9).

Too late, they will say: "I wish I had repented when there was still a time of grace. I wish I had heeded the Bridegroom's call to come and delight my soul in His rich banquet of salvation" (Isaiah 55:1-3). Too late, they will be like the foolish virgins at the door pleading: *"Lord, Lord, open to us!"* (vs. 11); only to hear those dreadful words: *"Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you"* (vs. 12). They will be shut out of the joys of heaven's wedding banquet. They will spend an eternal night in the darkness, realizing how foolishly they had fallen for the wooing calls of Satan and the world, spurning the love of the Bridegroom of the soul who had given His life to win them.

2) Be like the wise virgins who are ready to join His triumphal procession

Jesus says: *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour"* (vs. 13). How different it is with the wise virgins, who *"took oil in their vessels with their lamps"* (vs. 4). These represent all who keep watch for the Bridegroom in true faith, ready to join His triumphal procession.

Not only do they confess that Jesus is Lord with their mouths, but their hearts cling to Him as their only Savior. They hunger and thirst for His righteousness (Matthew 5:6). From the depths of their soul they confess that, as sinners, they have no plea before God but the blood of His Son that cleanses them of all their sin (1 John 1:7-9). They claim only the righteousness of Christ as the garment that covers them and presents them pure and holy before God, ready to enter His heavenly courts.

Therefore, they set their hearts on His heavenly Kingdom and not on earthly things. They are like the wise virgins who see to it that their oil does not run low. As the Savior provides His Word and Sacraments to strengthen their faith, they eagerly fill up on His means of grace. They say: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68). They come to His house confessing their sins, eager to hear His Absolution. As the Bridegroom sets before them a rich banquet of salvation at His Holy Table, they receive His Body and Blood thankfully as that which paid for their forgiveness and eternal life. As the baptized in Christ, they go forth in His forgiveness to walk in newness of life. They are strengthened by the Holy Spirit; their faith lamps burn brightly.

So when the cry is heard: *"Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"* they are ready. They sing with festive joy: *"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"* (Revelation 22:20). Jesus says: *"And those who were ready went in with him to the wedding"* (vs. 10). Dear believers in Christ, what a triumphant procession that will be! Whether it is at the moment when we breathe our last in this world, or when we see Jesus coming on the clouds, it will be to meet the Bridegroom of our soul, who loved us and gave Himself to win us. With festive joy, He will welcome us and escort us through the gates into His Father's house. Even the happiest marriage on earth can only dimly reflect the surpassing joy of that heavenly marriage. Heaven's wedding banquet will feature fresh joys and pleasures in His presence forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

So like the saints who have already joined that festive procession before us, let us not weary of keeping our lamps trimmed and burning, having our oil of faith replenished by the Holy Spirit through Christ's Word and Sacraments. And soon, you and I too shall be singing and dancing in that triumphant procession into the Bridegroom's heavenly courts!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.