

Salem-Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish
Order of Sunday Worship- 24th Sunday after Pentecost – November 12th, 2023
At Salem Lutheran Church

Prelude

Emily Larson, Musician

Welcome/Announcements

Invocation:

P: We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

P: O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your holy Word. We pray that You would open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. **C: Amen.**

Opening Hymn:

"America the Beautiful"

Praise #485

Confession of Sin:

P: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kyrie:

C: O God the Father in heaven, have mercy upon us!

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us!

O God the Holy Spirit, true Comforter, have mercy upon us!

Absolution:

P: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. To those who believe in his name he gives power to become the children of God, and has promised them his Holy Spirit. Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. Grant this Lord unto us all.

C: Amen.

Gloria:

P: Glory be to God in the highest.

C: And on earth peace, good will toward men.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray together.

C: O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalm-70

First Reading- Amos 5:18-24

Second Reading- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Gospel Reading- Matthew 25:1-13

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: God be praised for his glad tidings!

Apostles Creed

C: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Children's Message – “Jesus Loves Me”

Choir Singing

Offering and Offertory: *We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift might be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.*

Hymn:

“Because He Lives”

Praise #238

Sermon

Pastor Lexy Carson

“Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

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

Waiting. Waiting and more waiting. The average person in the United States spends about 3 days a year simply waiting. Waiting in line to checkout, waiting in line to the movies, waiting for the light to turn green. 3 days a year just physically waiting. That's not even including the emotional tole and time of waiting, it doesn't include the time spent waiting for a call, waiting for a cure, waiting for a child or grandchild, waiting for a diagnosis. Waiting whether it be in a waiting room or in your living room, troubled, anxious and grieving is hard, waiting is difficult and not something we enjoy. I've never once heard someone say my favorite hobby is waiting. No were not good at the waiting because it is hard.

In our Gospel for today, we have a difficult passage to take on. We have ten bridesmaids who are waiting for the bridegroom to show up. In Biblical times, the brides would simply be waiting until the groom showed up to take them to their wedding, the groom had to go prepare the house and make preparations and when he was done he would simply come and get the bridesmaids. He probably got lost a time or two because he refused to ask for directions but he would eventually get there and take the bridesmaids.

So the bridesmaids were to simply wait. And wait. And wait. And wait. And what happens when you are stuck waiting for a long time? Well you get preoccupied. You start doing this and that. Wash some dishes, do some laundry, fix a small project, it's amazing what you can get done while simply waiting for something else. Until you kind of forget you were even waiting in the

first place. It's kind of like when you are on hold so you put the phone on speaker phone and start doing those other things and suddenly a few hours later someone starts talking to you and you'd completely forgotten you were on hold.

This parable was being told and heard by a church that has been waiting, they have been waiting for Jesus to return and they thought it would happen rather quickly. When the Gospel of Matthew was being put together, formally written and organized it was probably about the third generation of Christians, so two generations of Christians have died off. And yet Jesus had not returned quickly, they were kept waiting. And waiting and waiting. And here we are two thousand years later waiting. This gap from the ascension until now.

The church then and the church now had simply been waiting, waiting for Jesus to return. And yet, two thousand years ago they grew tired of waiting and here we are now still tired of waiting. We've become busy instead, looking for all kinds of things to fill this void of waiting for Jesus. And listening to a group of my fellow pastors dive into this passage this past week, we get drug into trying to do things in this waiting time. We dig into parables like this and say well when Jesus does actually come, I will be prepared and ready. I won't be caught off guard and unprepared like those foolish five bridesmaids. I'm going to have my ducks in a room for when that time comes. I will have myself ready.

A parable like this one, strikes a deep fear in us and rightfully so nobody wants Jesus to turn to them and say "I do not know you." That is terrifying. And we start digging into this parable to find out how we can end up like the five that Jesus does choose. We start looking for what distinguished the two parties, and what draws our obvious attention is the oil and the flask.

This flask and oil we turn into a symbol of our faith. The five who don't bring oil, we tend to say didn't have faith and the five that do have faith. And we can get lost in this parable in trying to grasp what everything symbolizes. And were really left stuck fearful of whether we have oil in our lamp, and if it's enough. When the bridegroom does show up the five without ask for some of the others and they say no, there will not be enough so you better go to the dealers and buy some. Well you cant really walk into Dollar General or True Value and ask for some faith to purchase. That's not a thing.

Faith isn't something you can buy or even quantify. Do I have enough faith or should I go and buy some more? Am I responsible for getting myself some faith? If we imagine faith comes in quantity were misunderstanding the nature of faith. Faith is an absolute you either have it or you don't. You either trust or you don't. If you sort of trust someone you don't really trust them. If you trust someone not to steal your wallet but you don't trust them to watch your kids you don't really trust them. There's not degrees to faith, you either have faith or you don't.

So how again do we make sure we have faith? How do I make sure that I'm let into the banquet, how do I make sure that Jesus knows my name?

A parable truly strips everything out of our hands. This is not a parable of preparing for the wedding. It is the wedding day, all the preparations have been done. Some brought oil and some did not, there's no more time. The wise are wise and the foolish are foolish. There's really nothing else to do at this point and this is terrifying news if we believe this to be in our hands.

This is terrifying news if we are held accountable for being prepared for the time Jesus comes. This is terrifying news if Jesus takes into account all the things we have been doing and failing to do during this waiting time. This is terrifying news if we believe that we are in control of who God chooses.

But it is not in our control. It is in the bridegroom's control, it is in Jesus' control. And he's already chosen you. Jesus has already said I know you. In the waters of baptism God took a claim on you, he said I am the Lord your God, you are baptized in my name, in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit. You are an heir to the kingdom, you are my beloved chosen child. God has already chosen you and his promise doesn't expire or go bad, it's not like that gallon of milk in your fridge you need to throw out or like your driver's license that needs to be renewed. God's promises don't ever expire, they don't ever run out. The faith that God freely gives through his word and promise it won't return empty.

What strikes us with fear in this passage is the distinguishing of these bridesmaids. There's election, some chosen and some not. And we tend to think what separates them is what they did during this time of waiting, the five were foolish and reckless, they didn't prepare and didn't do what they were supposed to.

But notice what the bridegroom actually says to them "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Keep awake he says. And notice in verse 5, all ten of the bridesmaids grew drowsy and slept. All ten of them fell asleep. All of them.

This isn't the first time in scripture where people have been told to stay awake and they fall asleep anyway. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus tells his disciples to stay awake and keep watch and they fall asleep anyway. Not just once or twice but three times. And look how that turned out for Peter, Jesus told him to keep awake just like our parable for today and he doesn't have it in him to keep that command and yet God uses Peter to spread the Gospel, God gives Peter the keys of the kingdom to go and give people faith. This man who fell asleep.

So what does this mean for you? Will Jesus know you even though you've probably fallen asleep a time or two waiting for him to come. We already have the promise around this. Jesus Christ knows each and every single one of you. He has already said that he knows you and he isn't going to change his mind.

We imagine we have some responsibility to make sure Jesus remembers us but we don't. He isn't going to forget you, just like you wouldn't forget you had a child.

Jesus knows you, Jesus remembers you, Jesus isn't forget you. Jesus knows you by name.

Hymn: *"O Christ the Same"* Insert – WOV 778

Prayer of the Church: Each prayer will end: Lord, in your mercy. *C: Hear our prayer.*

Hymn: *"Lord Listen to your Children Praying"* Praise #413

Holy Communion

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts to the Lord.

C: We lift up our hearts unto the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is meet and right so to do. P: It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give praise to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Who did surround us with so great a cloud of witnesses to encourage us with their fellowship to run the race that is set before us, and with them to obtain the everlasting crown. Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name; evermore praising you and singing:

C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Invitation/Distribution

Thanksgiving-

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Let us give thanks and pray: We thank you Lord God almighty that you have refreshed us with these gifts; and we ask you, in your mercy, to strengthen us through these same gifts in faith toward you and in fervent love for one another; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

C: Amen.

Hymn:

"O Jesus, Blessed Lord to Thee"

Concordia #106

Benediction

P: Now may the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us his peace.

C: Amen, Amen, Amen.

Doxology

C: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dismissal: P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God!**

Postlude