

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Amos 5:18-24

18 Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. **19** It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. **20** Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light— pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness? **21** “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. **22** Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. **23** Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. **24** But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

5:18 *day of the LORD.*† The time when God will show himself the victor over the world, vindicating his claims to be the Lord over all the earth (see notes on 8:9; Isa 2:11, 17, 20). Israel wrongly expected to be exalted as a nation and longed for that day to come. Amos warned that the day would come, but not as Israel expected—it would be a day of “darkness, not light” (v. 20) for her, because she had not been faithful to God. (Cf. “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” and variations in 1Co 1:8; 3:12–15; 5:5; 2Co 1:14; Php 1:6, 10; 2:16.) Amos speaks primarily of an imminent and decisive judgment on Israel, not exclusively of the last day. (CSB)

Likely refers to the day in which God will allow Israel’s enemies to attack and destroy the northern tribes and then take them into exile. (TLSB)

darkness, and not light. There will be disaster, not salvation, for Israel. (TLSB)

5:19–20 The two pictures (v. 19) emphasize vividly the inescapability of God’s coming judgment. (CSB)

5:19 A pair of similes portrays things going from bad to worse, like “jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.” Israel’s condemnation is now inevitable. (TLSB)

5:20 *Is not ...?* The expected affirmative answer to this rhetorical question reinforces the “woe” just pronounced in v 18. (TLSB)

darkness ... gloom. See note, v 18. Repetition of “day of the LORD” and “darkness” leave no doubt about Israel’s sad outcome. (TLSB)

Full of tribulation and misery; the day of the Lord is darkness and not light; it would bring no deliverance to those who trample justice and right beneath their feet. (Kretzmann)

5:21–27 Again God directly addresses Israel with the charge of unfaithfulness. (CSB)

5:21–23 These three verses summarize and reject the current practice of religion in Israel. The institutions were not wrong in themselves; it was the worshipers and the ways they worshiped that were wrong. The people had no basis on which to come to God, because their conduct reflected disobedience of his law (see Isa 1:11–15 and note). (CSB)

Though Israel may continue to offer the worship described in these verses, it will do no good. Where simple justice and humility are lacking, even the most orthodox ritual and the finest of music is nothing more than a hypocritical sham. Luther: “The wicked do not please the Lord, regardless of how great and splendid their works may be” (AE 18:165). (TLSB)

5:21 *I cannot stand.* Lit. “I do not inhale with delight.” (CSB)

Forceful denunciations of Israel’s insincere worship. (TLSB)

feasts. The three major festivals required by the Law were Passover, Pentecost, and Booths. (TLSB)

solemn assemblies. Likely refers to the prayers and sacrifices offered on a daily and weekly basis. (TLSB)

5:22 **THOUGH YOU BRING** – They still continued to do in their effort to have the Lord accept their outward worship. (Kretzmann)

The Lord rejects all sacrifices offered by those acting righteous but lacking a sincere faith. Cf Mi 6:6–8. (TLSB)

5:23 **NOT LISTEN TO THE MUSIC** – Israel’s insincere religiosity and its consequent sham worship have become repugnant to God. The nation’s supposedly sacred music is nothing more than noise to Him. Without a right relationship to the Lord, attempting to worship is futile. (TLSB)

5:24 *justice ... righteousness.* Prerequisites for acceptance by God; but these are what Israel had rejected and scorned (cf. vv. 7, 10, 12b). (CSB)

God’s people are to produce justice continually and swiftly, like the flow of a river. Just as plants and animals need a steady supply of water to survive, so also human communities can flourish only when justice and righteousness prevail. (TLSB)

river ... never-failing stream. In contrast to stream beds that are dry much of the year. The simile is especially apt: As plant and animal life flourishes where there is water, so human life flourishes where there is justice and righteousness. (CSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ **Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.** ¹⁴ **We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we**

believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.

4:13 *those who fall asleep.* For the Christian, sleep is a particularly apt metaphor for death, since death's finality and horror are removed by the assurance of resurrection. Some of the Thessalonians seem to have misunderstood Paul and thought all believers would live until Christ returns. When some died, the question arose, "Will those who have died have part in that great day?" See note on v. 15. (CSB)

Although the Thessalonians had been firm in the face of persecution, one thing bothered them. What about their fellow believers who died before Jesus returned in glory? Would they be lost because of this? (PBC)

A euphemism for death (cf 1Ki 2:10). (TLSB)

others. The pagan world, Gentiles who do not know God. (TLSB)

who have no hope. Inscriptions on tombs and references in literature show that first-century pagans viewed death with horror, as the end of everything. The Christian attitude was in strong contrast (see 1Co 15:55–57; Php 1:21–23). (CSB)

Those who live without Jesus have no hope because they do not know of the resurrection. (TLSB)

It seems that the Thessalonian Christians, in their excessive eagerness concerning the second coming of the Lord, had stumbled into various misunderstandings. Their solicitude for their dead, for instance, caused them to fear that the latter would occupy a position secondary to that which they themselves, who would live till the second advent of the Lord, hoped to attain. This anxious concern incidentally tended to plunge them into a grief which came dangerously near being like that of the Gentiles. Therefore Paul combines admonition with instruction: But we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those that have fallen asleep, lest you grieve for them as do also the others that have no hope. It is true indeed that the faith of the Christians does not stifle and eradicate the natural affections. Christ Himself wept at the grave of His friend Lazarus. But even in this opening verse the apostle brings out two points that show the wide difference between the sorrow of the Christians and that of the unbelievers. In the first place, if Christians die, they fall asleep in the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 11, 30; 15, 20. Their death is like a gentle sleep, from which there will be a glorious awakening. For that reason, in the second place, the sorrow of the Christians at the death of their loved ones is altogether unlike that of the rest, of the outsiders, of the unbelievers, whose condition is aptly described by the words: They have no hope. When their friends and relatives die, they are gone, they are taken from them definitely,

never to be seen again. Such a memory of a happiness lost beyond recovery, of a parting without the hope of meeting again, produces a hopeless, a terrible state. (Kretzmann)

4:14 *died*. Paul does not say that Christ “slept,” perhaps to underscore the fact that he bore the full horror of death so that those who believe in him would not have to. (CSB)

But the Christians are in an altogether different position: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also those who fell asleep through Jesus will God bring with Him. (Kretzmann)

rose again. For the importance of the resurrection see 1Co 15, especially vv. 14, 17–22. (CSB)

That is the belief of all Christians, that Jesus truly died on the cross, but that just as truly He rose again on the third day. The believers in Christ, however, belong to Christ, they are partakers of all His work of redemption and of all the blessings which He earned through His vicarious suffering. (Kretzmann)

those who have fallen asleep in him. Believers who have died, trusting in Jesus. (CSB)

Jesus becomes a mediator through whom the dead are resurrected. (TLSB)

Therefore the Christians, all those that have fallen asleep in Christ, trusting in His complete salvation, will pass through death into life. Just as surely as we believe in the crucified and resurrected Christ, just as surely as we are united with Christ in life and in death through faith, just so surely the Lord will lead us and all believers that have fallen asleep in Jesus with our Savior into the realms of eternal glory. That is the comfort of the Christians with regard to those friends and relatives whom they have laid to rest in the grave. They are at rest, they are asleep in the Lord; even in death they are the Lord’s. When Christ, therefore, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory, and all believers with us, Col, 3:4. (Kretzmann)

4:15 *According to the Lord’s own word*. The doctrine mentioned here is not recorded in the Gospels and was either a direct revelation to Paul or something Jesus said that Christians passed on orally. (CSB)

A teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., Mt 22:23–33) or a revelation given to the apostles in His name. (TLSB)

The apostle now adds a word of instruction regarding those that will be living on earth at the coming of the Lord: For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we, the living ones, that remain over for the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those that fell asleep. This was a word, a saying, of the Lord which had been preserved by the disciples and is here recorded by the apostle. (Kretzmann)

we who are still alive. Those believers who will be alive when Christ returns. “We” does not necessarily mean that Paul thought that he would be alive then. He often identified himself with those he wrote to or about. Elsewhere he says that God will raise “us” at that time (1Co 6:14; 2Co 4:14). (CSB)

will certainly not precede. The Thessalonians had evidently been concerned that those among them who died would miss their place in the great events when the Lord comes, and Paul assures them this will not be the case. (CSB)

Those who died in Christ will have no disadvantage when the Lord returns. The second coming will be seen by them as well as the living. (TLSB)

When the last day comes, there will still be some believers living on earth, having been left over by God unto the return of Christ. But these believers will have no advantage over those that fell asleep in the Lord, whose bodies are lying in the grave. Both they and those that fell asleep in the Lord will be made partakers of the glory of their Lord and Savior. The Thessalonian Christians were evidently worrying lest their sleeping relatives and friends would not be present to see and receive Christ, the Victor, when He returns in the clouds of heaven for the Day of Judgment. They themselves, in the fervor of their first love, were so intensely eager for His coming, were so sure of His speedy advent, that this thought filled them with great anxiety. Paul therefore showed them that their fears were groundless. (Kretzmann)

4:16 *the Lord himself.* See Ac 1:11. (CSB)

cry ... voice ... sound. Three ways of expressing the same calling (action) of the Lord. (TLSB)

command. It is the quickening Word of the Lord. (TLSB)

archangel. The only named archangel in the Bible is Michael (Jude 9; see Da 10:13). In Scripture, Gabriel is simply called an angel (Lk 1:19, 26). (CSB)

Mentioned only one other time in the NT (Michael, Jude 9). The Lord uses angels to execute His will. The pseudepigraphical book 1 Enoch mentions seven archangels: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sarakiel, Gabriel, Remiel (1 Enoch 20:1–7). (TLSB)

dead in Christ. Those who passed away while believing in the Lord will rise first. Cf v 15. (TLSB)

will rise first. Before the ascension of believers mentioned in the next verse. (CSB)

4:17 *we who are still alive.* See note on v. 15. (CSB)

cf 2Th 1:5–10. Believers who remain alive on the earth. (TLSB)

He now also explains the sequence of events on the last day: Because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud summons, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will arise first; thereupon we, the living ones, that remain over, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we always be with the Lord. The events of the last day are here unfolded before our eyes as successive acts. The first is that the Lord Himself, the exalted Christ, will appear in the clouds of heaven, visible, as He ascended up on high. With great power and might He will come down from heaven, Acts 1, 11. With a loud summons, with a shout of command, as a victorious captain going forth to the destruction of His enemies, with the voice of an archangel summoning the great host of the heavenly spirits, with a trumpet of God, a majestic note that will strike terror into the hearts of His enemies and cause the hearts of the believers to beat higher with exultant joy, the great King will descend from His throne. It will be, as Luther writes, like the coming of a great and powerful king or emperor in full battle array, filling the air with the clamor of battle-cries and trumpets. The shouting of the victorious Conqueror of death and hell will reach the dead in their graves, the believers will hear the voice of their Savior, and they will come forth from their graves with glorified bodies, ready to join Him in His triumphal pageant, 1 Cor. 15, 42-44; Phil 3, 21. That will be the first event of interest in this connection. (Kretzmann)

caught up. † Or “taken up.” Millennialists read into this verb a “rapture,” from the Latin Vulgate rendering. Note that Paul seems to be describing something open and public, with loud voices and a trumpet blast. (CSB)

Gk *harpazo* carries with it the sense of a sudden and violent action. The point is that we will be gathered together at the resurrection, the dead as well as the living, when Christ returns. (The Vulg used the term *raptus*, from which the modern false doctrine of a “rapture” gets its name. Paul’s teaching is about the resurrection and not a secret return of Christ.) Chrys: “When they see the earth agitated, the dust mingling, the bodies rising perchance on every side, no one [causing] this, but the ‘shout’ being sufficient . . . when they see so great a tumult upon the earth,—then they shall know. . . . What fear will possess those that remain upon the earth” (*NPNF* 1 13:356). (TLSB)

But immediately afterwards the believers whom the Lord has left over till this day, who are still living in the flesh, will experience the power of Christ’s majesty in their own bodies. They will suddenly be caught up into the clouds to join the retinue of the King of kings. The mortality of their bodies will then also be left behind, this corruptible having put on incorruption, 1 Cor. 15:52, 53. (Kretzmann)

with the Lord. The chief hope of the believer (see 5:10; Jn 14:3; 2Co 5:8; Php 1:23; Col 3:4). (CSB)

In the ancient world, dignitaries were welcomed officially by people who escorted them. The focus is the coming together of the Lord and His people. The air is considered to be the abode of evil spirits (Eph 2:2), who will yield the place to Him who has all authority in the heavens and on earth. (TLSB)

In the company of their exalted Savior the believers will then appear in glory before the whole world, to be forever with the Lord, wherein the essence of eternal bliss consists, to be in His presence, to see Him face to face, world without end. (Kretzmann)

always be with the Lord. In heaven after the resurrection. (TLSB)

4:18 *encourage each other.* The primary purpose of vv. 13–18 is not to give a chronology of future events, though that is involved, but to urge mutual encouragement, as shown here and in v. 13. (CSB)

Some Thessalonians feared that loved ones who had died in Christ might not be able to see the second coming of the Lord. (TLSB)

With the certainty of such joy before us, the admonition of the apostle surely ought to find willing ears and ready obedience: So, then, encourage one another with these words. There is a world of consolation and comfort in this short passage, which can barely be indicated in a brief explanation. (Kretzmann)

4:13–18 Paul comforts the Thessalonians, saying that the dead in Christ will be the first to taste the resurrection and come with the risen Christ. At the second coming, we will all be together once more. Christians grieve over the death of loved ones but not as those who have no hope. The resurrection of our Lord, and the victory we have over death through Him, gives us a living hope, despite the fact that death separates loved ones and causes great pain. • Thank You, Lord Jesus, for making the way through death a path of hope and joy, due to Your resurrection. Create in our hearts the joy and hope of Your victory over death. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 25:1-13

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ ⁷ “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ⁹” “No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ ¹² “But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ ¹³ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

25:1-13 This part of Matthew’s Gospel is perfectly placed as Jesus prepares for his most important work yet—the cross. In ch 24 Jesus speaks about signs of the end. Then in ch 25 he emphasizes the need to be ready by teaching three parables, including our text. He begins with the parable of the ten virgins, then the parable of the

talents, and finally, the parable of the sheep and goats, last week's Gospel. This emphasis by Jesus can never be taken too lightly. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

This parable, with its wedding theme, has been the source of considerable debate over the centuries. It is found in Matthew alone. However, a wedding theme is used elsewhere in Scripture, either directly or implied. (See Is 62:5; Mt 22:1–14; Eph 5:25–32; Rev 19:7; 21–22.). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The parable can be divided into two parts (25:1b-5 and 25:6-12), with a formulaic introduction (25:1a) and a concluding exhortation appended (25:13). Here the introduction, "at that time the reign of heaven will be like", alerts the readers/hearers to an emphasis on the future the future full manifestation of the reign of heaven; this corresponds to the emphasis in this second half of the Eschatological Discourse on the Parousia and the age's consummation. (CC)

25:1 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN - *hē basileia tōn ouranōn*, translated literally, "the kingdom of the heavens." This is the last time in this Gospel that this expression appears. Lenski (R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943] 961–63) states that Matthew is alone in the use of this phrase, and it appears more than 30 times in his Gospel. The other Gospel writers use the phrase "the kingdom of God," which appears rarely in Matthew. The meaning, the place, however, is the same, the difference minor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

ten virgins. The bridesmaids, who were responsible for preparing the bride to meet the bridegroom. (CSB)

Scripture repeatedly compares the relationship between Christ and the Church to that of husband and wife (most famously in Eph 5:22-33). This parable uses similar though distinct imagery. Jesus is the Bridegroom; the virgins represent members of the church on earth. (TLSB)

On the wedding day, the bridegroom would dress in wedding garments, and his friends would escort him to the house of the bride. The bride would come out to meet them with her friends. The whole group would joyously parade to the home that the groom had prepared. Jesus used this imagery to describe His relationship to the Church: "In My Father's house are many room...I go to prepare a place for...If I go ...I will come again (John 14:2-3). The Christian life is like a betrothal. Heaven will be like marriage. (TLSB)

The ten virgins represent the community of those who claim Christ as Lord, the church. The fact that there is a division among them is simply one more instance of the theme that Matthew features so frequently, namely, that among the visible company of Jesus' disciples, not all will be found to be true followers when their Master returns. The life of a disciple is characterized by joy and security as well as by challenge and spiritual danger. As with the prior unit (24:45-51), Jesus here us warning his followers to remain

vigilant against the possibility of falling away and not being ready or able to honor him when he comes. (CC)

lamps. Torches that consisted of a long pole with oil-drenched rags at the top. (Small clay lamps would have been of little use in an outdoor procession.) (CSB)

All of them took their lamps, small, saucer-shaped vessels with a cover; in the middle of which was a small hole for pouring in the oil and for providing air; at one side a spout protruded and the wick came out through this. Such a lamp would not contain enough oil to burn all night, so that to carry it to a prolonged wedding-feast without an extra supply of oil was a strong example of improvidence. (Kretzmann)

25:2 WERE FOOLISH – *mōrai*, translated as “foolish.” It is the Greek root for the English word *moron*. Webster’s defines *moron* as a person who is notably stupid or lacking in good judgment. Leon Morris (*The Gospel according to Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992] 621) notes the split division of five wise and five foolish. Matthew seems to have an interest in people who behave in foolish ways. The application of this word comes in the fact that all ten virgins had lamps, but five of them were foolish because they took no oil with them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

There are various conclusions about the lamps and the oil mentioned by our Lord. According to Johann Ylvisaker (*The Gospels: A Synoptic Presentation of the Text of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1932] 620–22), the virgins are outwardly alike. In spite of outward appearances five of them did not have any oil. Oil symbolizes spirit and life. In other words, the foolish ones fell away from the faith. Lenski’s commentary is similar. The flame of the lamp and its light is faith and its good works. The oil is grace through the Word. The lamp is our outward Christianity. The foolish virgins have the outward signs but inwardly are strangers to Christ. We need to be going back constantly for that oil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 4)

The contrast between the foolish and the wise reminds us of the reference to the wise and foolish builders at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-27). In both places, if we take the wise to be believers and the foolish to be unbelievers, we miss the point. Jesus is preaching to His church. He is warning the foolish to “wise up.” It is a variation of the parable of the sower, in which Jesus warns us about the dangers of the devil (Mt. 13:19, persecution (Mt. 13:21, and covetousness (Mt. 13:22). (PBC)

25:3 DID NOT TAKE – Conversion must be coupled with faithful perseverance. Coming to faith will do you no good if you do not stand firm to the end (Mt. 24:13). Or in the imagery of an earlier parable; it is not good enough to accept the invitation to the wedding feast; you must also wear wedding clothes (Mt. 22:11-14). (PBC)

oil. Olive oil. (CSB)

The oil in the parable represents whatever it takes for you to be ready to honor the Bridegroom when he comes again in glory. (CC)

Streets if even large cities had no public lighting. The foolish virgins do not consider the possibility that the bridegroom might be delayed, and so they bring no extra oil for their lamps. The oil represents a faith continually sustained by the means of grace, thus able to endure until Christ's return. (TLSB)

Oil symbolizes spirit and life. In other words, the foolish one fell away from the faith. The foolish virgins have the outward signs but inwardly are strangers to Christ. We need to be going back constantly for that oil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 4)

The OT practice of anointing kings, priests, and prophets with olive oil certainly suggests a connect between oil and the Holy Spirit. And the work of the Holy Spirit is masterfully summarized by Martin Luther in his explanation of the Third Article: he calls us to faith by the Gospel, fathers us into his church, enlightens us with his spiritual gifts, sanctifies us for the life of good works, and keeps us in the true faith until our end. (PBC)

25:4 THE WISE – The wise virgins, that were thoughtful and used foresight, took an additional supply of oil with them in vessels provided for that purpose; the foolish and improvident, that refused to heed the necessity, took their lamps only. "When the Kingdom is preached, these are the results: Some receive it with all their heart and are serious about it, believe the Word, make the most strenuous efforts to practice good works, let their lamps shine before the world; for they are well provided with lamps and oil, that is, with faith and love: these are represented by the wise virgins. Then there are some that also accept the Gospel, but are sleepy, are not serious about it, think they can succeed with their works, are secure, and believe it can be paid for with works; those are indicated in the foolish virgins. In Scripture those are called foolish that do not obey the Word of God, but follow their own mind, will not be taught, accept no opinion but their own. But it will happen to them at last as it here happened to the foolish virgins. These two kinds of people are in this Kingdom, namely, where the Gospel and the Word of God is preached and there should be exercise of faith: some follow, some do not follow.... Remember, then, in this Gospel that the lamps without oil signify a mere external thing and a bodily exercise without faith in the heart; but the lamps with oil are the internal riches, also the external works with true faith. (Kretzmann)

25:5 WAS A LONG TIME IN COMING – Many early Christians expected Jesus' return in their generation. This parable implies that Jesus might not come as quickly as some expected, while encouraging the Church not to lose hope. (TLSB)

The groom's delay in the parable signals that there will be an (undermined) interval of time between the Son's exaltation to God's right hand (22:44) and his return in glory. That glorious return will happen suddenly. You cannot get ready; you just need to be

ready. Entrance into the wedding feast with the bridegroom refers to entering the fullness of eschatological life and salvation. (CC)

25:6 AT MIDNIGHT – The Jews often expected the Messiah to arrive at midnight, the time of the Passover visitation. The arrival at midnight certainly should not be taken as a literal prediction. The idea is that they be prepared like the people waiting for the Passover.

The bridegroom suddenly appears at midnight, when many eyes are heavy. (TLSB)

25:7 ALL THE VIRGINS WOKE UP – The fact that they were asleep suggests that all carried on the reasonable routine of daily life. The problem was that five were not prepared for the pleasant interruption of that routine. Sleep here is not sloth to be condemned; lack of preparation for the sudden awakening was the problem. The point is not to flee the responsibilities of daily life and sit on the rooftops until Christ comes again. The point is to look with a kind of split vision – one eye on the God-given tasks set before us here in our vocation, the other eye watching for the groom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

trimmed. The charred ends of the rags were cut off and oil was added. (CSB)

Adjusted the wicks to make them burn brightly. (TLSB)

Everyone's lamp has gone out during the period of waiting. With lamps out, the virgins prepare them quickly and then light the wicks, it is at that point that the foolish virgins realize that they need more oil, and they ask the wise virgins to give some to them. (CC)

All of the virgins quickly jumped up and trimmed the wicks of their lamps, in order that they might be burning with full brightness as they entered into the wedding-feast. (Kretzmann)

25:8-9 By the time the bride groom arrives, it is too late to prepare. Hill: "In other words, no one can be aided by the works and merits of another, because it is necessary for everyone to buy oil for his own lamp" (Ap XXI 30). (TLSB)

25:8 GIVE US – The improvident virgins were not ready for the emergency, their lamps, whose oil had been consumed, were at the point of going out, there was a mere glimmering of a dry wick. But their appeal to the prudent virgins met with a cold reception. If their request were granted, there was danger that they all would lack oil and be refused admission to the marriage festival. (Kretzmann)

25:9 NO THEY REPLIED – The fact that all must fend for themselves underscores the individuality of the Christian faith. We cannot rely on the merits of others or the intercession of saints. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)

The crux is this: what matters most is meeting the bridegroom with appropriate celebration. Nothing can be allowed to put that in jeopardy. The point is being ready to honor the groom when the time to honor him has arrived. (CC)

This is not selfishness, but sound prudence. In the emergency of Christ's coming to Judgment, the helpfulness of the Christian life is a thing of the past, and the bands of friendship and even of the closest relationship are torn asunder. The time of grace is at an end. The merchants, the dispensers of God's grace, have definitely closed their shops. Everyone must stand on his own merits. "That is a clap of thunder against those that rely upon the merits of the saints and other people; since none of them has enough for himself, not to speak of having something left over to impart to others. (Kretzmann)

there may not be enough. Torches required large amounts of oil in order to keep burning, and the oil had to be replenished about every 15 minutes. (CSB)

25:10 *marriage feast.* The future glory of heaven is repeatedly compared to the joy and intimacy of a wedding feast (cf 22:1–14; Is 25:6–9). (TLSB)

shut. Once this door was shut, there was no possibility of entry into the feast. (TLSB)

Therefore, when they now want to come and knock, and would also like to go in to the wedding, they will have to hear, as did the foolish virgins: I know you not; those that were to come in have come in. That will be a terrible sentence. The frantic attempts of the imprudent virgins to provide fuel for their lamps were without avail. And, in the meantime, the festival procession reached the home of the bride. Those that were fully prepared in every respect went with the bride groom and were seated at the festival board, whereupon the door was locked. Fatal words, shutting off all hope! (Kretzmann)

25:11–12 *Lord, lord ... I do not know you.* Words echoing 7:21–23, where Jesus warns His audience that He will recognize and admit into the kingdom of heaven only those who do the will of His Father. (TLSB)

25:11 SIR! SIR! – The foolish virgins return too late. Their double “Sir! Sir! Is laden with much the same emotions we noted in Jesus’ lament, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...(Mt. 23:37). They illustrate Jesus’ warning at the close of His Sermon on the Mount: “Not everyone who says to me , ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’” (Mt. 7:21-23). (PBC)

When it was too late, the other virgins came. It is not stated whether they had any success in their quest. But they made an attempt to gain admittance to the wedding-feast. (Kretzmann)

25:12 Without success! With solemn emphasis they are told: I know you not. Their terror, repentance, and despair "have come too late; they have neglected their opportunity; they have forfeited their happiness. (Kretzmann)

25:13 KEEP WATCH –Jesus warns all of us with the imperative *grēgoreite*, translated "Watch!" from the verb *grēgoreō*, translated "I watch." Some suggest that the Christian dwell on this to the point of separating oneself from the church's mission in the world. We can't accomplish much of the Great Commission if we are always looking into the sky. However, when we focus on our Lord and his teaching, we focus on Law and Gospel. It is this kind of Christian lifestyle that keeps faith healthy. A healthy faith is a faith that is constantly ready for the Day of the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 4)

25:1–13 Jesus warns that many invited to share in the eternal joy of His kingdom will miss out by failing to have a living faith at the end. Though some will be condemned for heinous crimes and gross sins, many more will fail to enter heaven because they neglected their faith. Even so, no matter how depleted our faith is, Jesus' grace can fill us to overflowing with a single word. • Keep us ever filled to overflowing, O Lord, that we continually abound in faith, hope, and love for You. Amen. (TLSB)