

**“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup> The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.**

**<sup>6</sup> “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’**

**<sup>7</sup> “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’**

**<sup>9</sup> “‘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.’**

**<sup>10</sup> “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.**

**<sup>11</sup> “Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’**

**<sup>12</sup> “But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’**

**<sup>13</sup> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (NIV 84)**

Theme: Celebrate at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb

1. The Groom is coming soon.
2. The celebration is never-ending.

Everyone loves a wedding—okay, almost everyone. First and foremost it is a man and a woman coming together as one according to the will and institute of God. So every Christian loves the wedding ceremony. But it’s not just that—afterword is the wedding reception—the party. That’s what most people come to a wedding for. There is good food, hopefully some free drinks. Some people enjoy dancing. There are friends and family there—some whom you haven’t seen since the last wedding.

People love weddings so much that they get upset when a prior commitment prohibits them from attending. A wedding is such a big

event that rarely will someone forget about the wedding; nor will they fail to get ready in time and miss it completely. And yet, when it comes celebrating at the Marriage feast of the Lamb many do just that—they get so sidetracked by the world that they are unprepared for when Christ comes. So today we see that the groom is coming soon, and this celebration will never-ending.

It was the Tuesday of Holy Week when Jesus’ disciples asked him about the end of the world. Jesus told them gave them signs that the end is near—wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, and so on. And then, to teach them about when he would come on the Last Day he told them the parable of the 10 virgins—our text for today. At the time it was common for wedding celebrations to last a week. The festivities started when the groom came to pick up his bride and take her to the wedding. On this particular 10 virgins, the bridesmaids waited for the groom to come and they would go with him to the wedding.

But he was a long time in coming. And five of the virgins foolishly didn’t take any extra oil with them. When the groom finally came in the middle of the night those five foolish virgins realized they ran out of oil. So they rushed to go buy some. But in the meantime the groom had arrived and the wedding party went into the party without them and closed the door. The five foolish virgins begged and pleaded to be let in. But not one recognized them. They did not enter with the groom and no one knew them. They were left out in the cold, devastated that they couldn’t join in the celebration.

There are a few cultural anomalies in Jesus’ parable. There is no mention of a bride, and it was typical that the bridesmaids accompany her, not the groom. It was highly unlikely that the groom would be late to pick up his bride for their wedding. And finally if someone or a group of people were late for the wedding they still would have let them in. Jesus made these changes on purpose. He is drawing attention to the real purpose of the story. This is what it will be like on the Last Day.

He concluded by saying, **Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.** Jesus will come suddenly. We don’t know exactly when he will come. But we know that he can come at

any time. It may seem as if the Lord is a long time in coming. And it is easy to fall asleep or to become unprepared.

You can tell yourself it's not going to happen—you won't be caught unprepared. But I'm sure the five foolish virgins thought the same thing. You see, you must be prepared at all times. And it's so easy to let your mind wander. Or you tell yourself that you'll get back into Church some other time, when things slow down in your life, when you get back on your feet, when you are feeling better. When you are older you'll start worrying about your eternal life—right now you are having too much fun. Or when you have kids, then you'll make the change.

Many a fool have thought the same thing. Perhaps they were actually sincere in their desire. But it never happened because their own personal Judgment Day came when they died. They got caught unprepared; and they stood before the Lord who did not know them. We like to think we are invincible, especially with all the medical advancements we have made today—so that we'll never die suddenly. And in many cases that is true, but for many others, it wasn't. It's so easy to get enticed away by the things of this world. Our minds start to wander. Maybe it's work or family. Perhaps it's just having a little fun, relaxing a little bit. We get sidetracked from God and his Word because your mind is on other things, or your life is just too busy right now. Maybe it's not you—you are here worshiping God right now, your mind is on him now. But perhaps you see this in loved ones. They have lost sight of what's important. They are too busy for the Lord. Their wicks aren't trimmed, they have no more oil. And what happens if we aren't prepared? We miss out. Christ will come again in his full glory with all his angels and he will take all believers with him to the wedding supper of the Lamb. If we get caught unprepared we'll be left-out of the wedding reception. The celebration will go on without us. We'll be left out, not in the cold, but in the fires of hell pleading to be let in. But Jesus will reply, **I never knew you, away from me, you evildoers.**

How horrible it would be left out of that celebration. How awful it would be to have Jesus say to you at the gates of heaven, **I tell you the truth, I don't know you.**

But, you don't have to worry about being caught unprepared. For you are already prepared. You are prepared for Christ's coming through him. There is nothing you have to do to prepare yourself. Your preparation isn't a state of mind, or a matter of doing good works. It's not about how much time you spent in prayer, or even in the Word and sacraments. No, you are worthy by the perfect life and innocent suffering and death of Jesus. Because of him you are pure and innocent in the eyes of God. Through his resurrection your body will be given a new life on the Last Day. Because it is in Christ that you are prepared you don't have to worry about preparing yourself. And it is through faith in him that you receive the blessings that Christ offers to you. So it is through faith in him that you are prepared for his coming. So we still want to be in the Word, we still want to receive the Lord's Supper often—not so that we can prepare ourselves, but so that our faith may be strengthened as we await his return. And if you are without faith when Christ returns, you will end up the same way as the foolish virgins.

And a wedding celebration awaits—a marriage feast is yours. It's one of the best parts of the wedding reception. A good meal—often a buffet, being able to eat to your heart's content. The dancing, the singing, the good friends and long time acquaintances—its all part of this marriage feast of the lamb.

But there is something more—something better. A marriage is the beginning of a life between a husband and a wife. After the wedding reception the two begin to live together for the rest of their lives. Throughout Scripture Jesus is depicted as the groom and the Church, true believers, are his bride. On the last day we begin the rest of our lives living with our groom, the Lamb of God. We will live with him forever.

You will be with Christ in his full glory. And you will share in that glory. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, **Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**

A glorious body means, in part, that we'll have a perfect body. A body free from sin and the effects of sin. No more pain or sorrow, or weeping or gnashing of teeth and no more death. A perfect life with our perfect Savior, forever.

In our second lesson John gives us a glimpse of the celebration at this wedding supper of the Lamb. God's children were singing his praises:

**Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.**

And another, **Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."** At the marriage feast of the Lamb songs of praise and exultation fill the halls of Zion. For Christ has returned to take his bride, the Church home.

There are two phrases that apply to most things in this life: The first is, "all good things must come to an end." Many wedding receptions end around midnight—by that time many of the older guests have left—heading for bed. The party has to end sometime. The other is, "Too much of a good thing." If you have been to a number of weddings in a short period of time, you know what I'm talking about. They get old after awhile. You get sick of them, a little bored.

Not so with the marriage feast of the Lamb. You will never get sick of this celebration. A perfect life with Jesus in his full glory will never get old. You will never get tired of singing the praises of the one who saved you. You will gladly shout his name throughout the halls of heaven. And this celebration will never come to an end. Midnight will never come. It is a never-ending celebration. It will last for eternity—forever and ever, and eternal celebration. And because of Christ, you will be there. Amen.