Sermon for the
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost



Date: November 8, 2026
Location: Zion – Colby, WI
Christ – Abbotsford, WI
St. Paul – Green Grove, WI



Old Testament: Amos 5:18-24
Epistle Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:1-13

Sermon Series: Faithful to the Last
Sermon Title: Faithful in the Waiting
Sermon Text: Matthew 25:1-13

Hymns:
Opening: LSB 515 – Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers (v.1,4)
Sermon: LSB 516 – Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying (v.1,3)
Offering: LSB 781 – We Give Thee But Thine Own (v.1,4,5)
Closing: LSB 708 – Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart (v.1,3)

Distribution:
LSB 685 – Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus
LSB 733 – O God, Our Help in Ages Past
LSB 563 – Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness
LSB 617 – O Lord, We Praise Thee



Text: Matthew 25:1-13

[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’

And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’

But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Waiting for Our Lord



You don't like waiting, do you? Neither do I. Waiting in line, waiting for your web page to load, waiting in traffic, waiting for your meal to arrive at the restaurant, waiting for Pastor to get his sermon going. We like 'now.' Fast food, fast lanes on the freeway, faster internet and faster cell service, fast church. Don't make me wait, make it short, sweet, and to the point. Whether all that's good or bad is debatable.

We're waiting for Jesus' return. Today He describes that return as the arrival of a bridegroom. Ten virgins wait to welcome him. All become drowsy and fall asleep. When the announcement comes, five are ready and five are not.[1] The question is not whether we can stay awake every moment. The question is whether we are ready to meet the One who is coming.

For those who belong to Him, His arrival means joy: the celebration begins. Jesus doesn't tell this parable, this story, so His people will dread His arrival or live in fear of missing it. He tells it so we will be ready to welcome Him.

Here's my question: How do we wait for Jesus when His coming seems so delayed? Nearly 2,000 years seems a bit long.[2] It'd be great if we could jot a note on a calendar. We can't. We can't know the date or the hour, and we can't borrow somebody else's faith when He arrives. It's not the kind of thing where you can say, "I'll get around to that later when I have more time, or when I'm older."

He calls us to watch. How? By living in repentant trust and receiving the gifts He gives to build and sustain that trust.[3] Christianity isn't just about an event far in the future. The promise of His coming shapes the life you live now.

Two Ditches Along the Road



I want you to catch this because there are two precarious errors people fall into on this subject. It's like the ditches along a road. There's one on each side. It's best to stay out of both of them. One side is thinking that we have to earn our place at the feast. If your team wins the big game and you go out to celebrate, someone who is not on the team does not have the right to join you. Those on the team have earned their place at that table.

That's not how God's kingdom works. As though readiness for the celebration can be earned or purchased by our religiousness. I have served more, given more, prayed more, attended more than someone else. Certainly that makes me ready-er.[4] That's not how God's kingdom works. Jesus doesn't give us this parable as a method or means for earning a place.

1 Matthew 25:1–7
2 Matthew 24:36; 25:13; 2 Peter 3:8–9
3 Romans 10:17; Augsburg Confession V 1-3; Small Catechism, Creed – Third Article and its explanation.
4 Ephesians 2:8-10; Augsburg Confession IV 1-3 and VI 1-3

On the other side is the idea that His coming makes no difference to our life now. I can put Him off. There will be more time later. Amos, the prophet we heard today, has something to say about that. He warns people who expect God to come and vindicate them while they continue to practice open injustice and empty worship.[5] They want God's approval without God.

The day they imagine will not come. God will not be fooled by a plastic, pious performance that tries to hide a heart not turned to Him. His call for justice exposes their sin. That call doesn't offer them another way to buy salvation.

Knowing the Bridegroom Who Comes for Us



Jesus doesn't label the oil as good works or as a measurable amount of faith. The story shows us people who are ready when the bridegroom comes and people who are only present in appearance.[6] When the unprepared return, the door is shut. Their cry cannot undo what they have missed.

That's a serious warning. We can't live on another person's faith, on family connections, or on the assumption that being around the Church is the same thing as trusting Jesus.[7]

The One who calls us to be ready is the One who has given His life to bring us into His joy. We know His heart through His cross and resurrection. It is there He makes you rich in the currency of the kingdom.[8] He calls you to receive the welcome He has won for you.

Knowing that should make a difference in how we wait. We don't need to pretend that the world around us never gets the best of us. A sinning Christian can still cling to a faithful Savior.[9] When your conscience accuses you or the future frightens you, His answer is not a demand that you produce more confidence in yourself. His answer is His promise: He has died for you, He has risen, and He has not forgotten you. Bring your cares to Him. Hear His Word. Receive His forgiveness. His faithfulness holds you when your strength doesn't.

The God Who Gives His Son



What kind of God is God? He is a giving God. All that you have is from your Father in heaven. If He didn't give it, you wouldn't have it. All of it is a gift from Him for you. He knows you, made you, loves you, and sustains you even when trials seem to surpass your strength.[10] His care doesn't depend on your ability to manage anything.

Luther wrote in the Small Catechism:

> …all this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.[11]

We deserve nothing. He gives it anyway.

5 Amos 5:18–24
6 Matthew 25:3-4
7 Matthew 7:21-23; 25:11-13. Augsburg Confession VIII 1-2
8 Romans 4:25; Ephesians 1:7; Small Catechism, Creed, Second Article and its explanation
9 1 John 1:8-2:2; 1 Peter 5:7; Augsburg Confession XII 1-6
10 James 1:17; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; Small Catechism, Creed, First Article and its explanation
11 Small Catechism, Creed, First Article, explanation

Then we find out more about our giving God: He hasn't only given daily bread. He's given far more: His only Son. Jesus came and gave His life for you on the cross. He entered the darkness of judgment Amos was warning about. He carried the condemnation our mess deserves.[12]

Then, risen from the dead, He calls us to trust Him and wait for His coming in hope. The Bridegroom we wait for is the Savior who has already come to rescue you. His wounds tell us why we can look forward to His arrival.

He gives still more. He gives His Holy Spirit, who creates and sustains faith through His Word and Sacraments, brings us forgiveness, and holds before us the promise of resurrection and life everlasting.[13] We are not on our own. He continues to speak, forgive, feed, and strengthen us.

Serving in Freedom and Joy



Starting from that place, that understanding of who our God is and what He does, puts Jesus at the center of your life and that affects how you live. It puts things into perspective: both our promised eternal life, and also our life right here and right now. What you do matters. How you live matters. Not to get anything from God, He's already given you all things, but because your neighbor needs you: your children, your parents, your spouse, your classmates, your co-workers, and your friends need you. How you live tells the world what you believe about your God and what He is like.[14] God gives to you, so you can be like Him and give too.

Last week we remembered that waiting sometimes includes grief. There will be an empty chair at some tables this Christmas. There is someone you expected to grow old with. There is a grave and a name on it you struggle to speak without tears. Does Jesus' delay mean He's forgotten them, or you?

St. Paul said:

> We grieve, but not as those who have no hope.

Jesus died and rose again. When He comes, the dead in Christ will rise. His people will be gathered to Him and will be with the Lord forever. Paul gives these words so Christians can encourage one another.



We do not know when, but we do know He is coming. The crucified and risen Christ will gather His people to Himself. That promise gives us something to say at hospital beds and gravesides. Death don't live here any more. Christ is risen.[15]

He comes to you now in His Holy Supper. The same Jesus whose coming we wait for is here now giving you His real Body and Blood, here and now, for the forgiveness of your sins. He

12 Isaiah 53:4-6; Galatians 3:13; Romans 8:1-3
13 Romans 10:17; Titus 3:5-7; Augsburg Confession V 1-3; Small Catechism, Creed, Third Article and its explanation.
14 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18.
15 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 54-57

nourishes and strengthens you through the waiting. Here you receive an appetizer, a foretaste of the feast to come that has no end.

Your hope of that celebration rests on Jesus, who has redeemed you. So keep on hearing Him. Keep on receiving His gifts. Encourage each other. Serve the neighbor He has placed next to you.

And when the waiting is hard, pray: "God, come quickly to help.[16]" He hears. He is faithful through the waiting. And when He comes, the waiting will give way to joy.

Amen.



16 Psalm 70:1