

**Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**  
**The Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13**

**Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost**  
**November 8, 2020**

**While Waiting For Glory**  
**Sermon Preached by Gary R. Ulrich**  
**American Lutheran Church of Sun City**

Waiting for glory! You believe He is coming, don't you? Let us allow Jesus to highlight this glorious event in our faith even as he journeys to his death in his last days in Jerusalem. This journey should take precedent over all journeys in our earthly lives, as it is the fulfillment of God's promises to believers as we now live in His Kingdom of Grace on this earth. This is where our citizenship lies first and foremost. This is what binds us together in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us follow Jesus as he enters Jerusalem as a Royal King with shouts and songs of, "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*" (Matthew 20:9) Jesus immediately proceeds to the temple. He drives out all who sold and bought in the temple. He turns tables over and drives out the money changers and profit makers saying, "*It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers!*" (Matthew 21:13) Jesus keeps showing God's glory in the temple by healing the blind and the lame.

The next day he again comes to the temple. His authority was challenged by the scribes and Pharisees, leaders of the temple. He answered their questions and rebuked those who tried to discredit him in front of the worshipers present. He teaches in parables. These parables excited the people and confounded the temple leaders in guilt and rage. They plot to kill Jesus.

Through the parables, Jesus teaches that in God's Kingdom, no repentant sinner is turned away. God's Kingdom invites all, is open to all. Jesus teaches that God's judgement of people is based upon their reaction to Jesus. He makes it clear that rejecting Jesus would exclude them from God's Kingdom. They would be "hell bound", living in an eternity of the absence of God's mercy, grace and presence.

Jesus also answers more questions of deceit from the temple leaders. He tells them loyalty and obedience to him (Jesus) does not mean that one should avoid or neglect a duty or responsibility of human rulers that set before them with the words, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are of God.*" (Matthew 23:1)

He answers a question asked by the Sadducees, mocking the belief of a resurrection, with a question that tried to "trap" him, to discredit him. They asked about a woman being widowed by 7 men (brothers) and then dying with this question, "*In the resurrection, therefore of the seven, whose wife shall she be? For they all had her.*" (Matthew 22:8) Jesus destroys them with an answer from scripture and God's almighty power. He answers very directly and pointedly to them. "*You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as far as the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: I am the God of*

*Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not a God of the dead but of the living.” (Matthew 22:29-32)*

Jesus then gives them the great commandment that combines the law into two new binding statements for all to observe. *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 23:37-39)*

Jesus in his last days, continues to set the course of the faithful for all to hear the Gospel message. The journey of all to the “close of the age”, the “coming of the Son of Man.” In this teaching, proclamation and direction of our faith and life, we may want to ask, “When, Lord, when will this happen?” Jesus answers us, as he did to those in the temple, *“No one knows the day or the hour but God the Father.” (Matthew 24:6)*

We may also ask, Lord, what shall we do while we are waiting? And Jesus can again tell us the parable of the 10 virgins waiting, waiting, waiting for the bridegroom, which is the arrival of Jesus as promised.

We could even become more impatient. We may not like parable teachings and want to know what we should do while we’re waiting and watching. After all, we are living on this earth, totally involved in the passions, duties and actions of a sinful world. Our wish may be to have it given to us without trying to figure it out.

This question, “WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN” has been asked for centuries. And even predictions were made. Nothing happened! So, if everything is so certain, what do I have to look for in Jesus coming?

St. Peter gives it straight to us as he writes in his first epistle, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading that is kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)*

Born again to a new life, being involved in a life work of “faithfulness” in the journey of life now on earth with the eternal hope and security of a future continued life in glory. St. Paul makes this point clear when he writes to the Corinthian Church, *“We hope for Christ not only in this life, but are begotten again into a lively hope, to an inheritance. (1 Corinthians 5:19)*

Faithfulness to our Lord’s commands in our life and promise of a future life will keep us plenty busy, alert and awake. It is a way of life. The whole purpose of the work of Jesus Christ is the salvations of sinners.

Jesus fulfills his three offices of service in his work on earth. He makes known the facts of his journey as he obtains for all the “forgiveness of sins” in his Priestly Office. He makes known that his journey on earth is offered to all. A free gift of grace. He offers all the blessings of His redemption. He draws all people to himself in his Prophetic Office. All authority in heaven and earth is given to Jesus by God the Father Almighty. Jesus rules in all things. Under his authority, through the ministry of the church, all may obtain the Glory prepared for them. All events and happenings on earth are for the benefit of His people in his Royal Office.

Jesus also tells us through scripture that the last day will not be immediate. It will be revealed only after considerable time and trouble. Jesus gives us warnings that these troubled times may distract us and tempt us to turn our attention and affection away from him.

Now, Jesus' teaching of the 10 virgins comes to life. Jesus reinforces the call to be ready. Be ready while you are waiting for Glory. The teaching means; KEEP YOUR LAMP LIT...for guidance. Let it show you the way you should go, as the Psalmist writes. *"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* (Psalm 119:105) The lamp is the gateway to Glory in God's presence and love.

STAY OILED...Keep your hearts and minds turned to Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit fill you without discernment while reading and listening to his Word. The substance of God's love to you is your REBIRTH.

KEEP YOUR LAMP TRIMMED... Keep the Gospel burning in your love to God in your heart, mind and soul. Make your light clear and bright, not smoky or foggy as you jump through distractions, hindrances, barriers, prejudices by loving one another as Jesus has loved you.

This is the power of God unto salvation. God's heavenly rule will open up to you. And, on that last day will lead you into the Glory of God.

Our Psalm for today tells us of our wait and cry for deliverance with a heartfelt plea, *"Come to me quickly...you are my helper and deliverer...do not tarry."* (Psalm 70:5)...HE'S COMING!

Our epistle reading from St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians tells us how it will happen. *"For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangels call and with the sound of God's trumpet will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and so we will be with the Lord forever. Encourage one another."* (1Thessalonians 4: 16-18)...HE IS COMING!

As we wait to see him and greet him we again pray the words of the hymn that was sung this day that tells the whole story.

REJOICE, REJOICE BELIEVERS, AND LET YOUR LIGHT APPEAR

THE EVENING IS ADVANCING, AND THE DARKER NIGHT IS NEAR  
THE BRIDEGROOM IS ARISING AND SOON IS DRAWING NIGH:  
UP, PRAY AND WATCH AND WRESTLE: AT MIDNIGHT COMES THE CRY.

THE WATCHERS ON THE MOUNTAIN PROCLAIM THE BRIDEGROOM NEAR.  
GO FORTH AS HE APPROACHES WITH ALLELUIAS CLEAR  
THE MARRIAGE FEAST IS WAITING: THE GATES WIDE OPEN STAND.  
ARISE OH HEIRS OF GLORY, THE BRIDEGROOM IS AT HAND

OUR HOPE AND EXPECTATION O JESUS NOW APPEAR  
ARISE, O SUN SO LONGED FOR O'ER THIS BENIGHTED SPHERE

WITH HEARTS AND HANDS UPLIFTED, WE PLEAD O LORD TO SEE  
THE DAY OF EARTH'S REDEMPTION THAT SETS YOUR PEOPLE FREE

YES, HE IS COMING, BE READY.

THE DOOR WILL NOT BE SHUT BEFORE YOU. IT WILL BE OPENED TO THE  
KINGDOM OF GLORY. AMEN