

Summary

In Matthew 25:1–13, Jesus tells a story about ten bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom. All ten are waiting. All ten fall asleep. But when the bridegroom finally arrives, only five are prepared to enter the wedding celebration.

Jesus uses this story to help us understand what it means to live in the meantime—in the time between his first coming and his promised return.

Waiting is hard. Sometimes God seems close, and other times he seems distant. We can become discouraged, tired, and tempted to assume that life will simply continue as it always has. We can also confuse familiarity with Christianity for genuine faith, relying on church attendance, religious knowledge, or good works rather than trusting Christ.

But being ready doesn't mean never getting tired. It means leaning on the promises God gives us in Christ. Faith cannot be borrowed, manufactured, or outsourced. It is a gift of God, created and sustained by the Holy Spirit through God's Word, Baptism, Communion, and the community of believers.

We don't sustain ourselves through the long wait. God sustains us through his gifts. Because Jesus has promised to return, we wait with hope and joyful expectation.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for gathering us together and giving us the opportunity to hear your Word and encourage one another. As we talk about Jesus' promise to return, help us recognize the ways we grow weary while waiting. Keep us from relying on our own efforts, religious habits, or feelings. Instead, turn our hearts toward Jesus and the promises you have given us through your Word and Sacraments. Send your Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and help us encourage one another along the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's something you've had to wait much longer for than you originally expected?

Key Verses

- Matthew 25:1-13
- Matthew 7:21-23
- Matthew 7:24-26
- Psalm 70:4-5
- John 14:1-3
- 1st Corinthians 1:8-9

Questions

1. The Christian life is lived in the meantime, between Jesus' first coming and his promised return. What makes waiting difficult for you? Are there times when you wonder whether God is really at work or whether anything will ever change?
2. The message talked about how our faith can seem to fluctuate between times when Jesus feels close and times when he feels far away. How do you typically respond when God seems distant? What helps you remember his promises during those seasons?
3. The message said, “Being ready does not mean not being tired. Being ready ... is leaning into and leaning on the promises that God gives us in Christ.” What does that mean in practical terms? How might it change the way you think about seasons of doubt, discouragement, or spiritual weariness?
4. The five foolish bridesmaids discovered that they couldn't borrow what they lacked. Why can't someone else's faith take the place of our own trust in Jesus? How can we encourage the faith of family members and friends without assuming responsibility for something only God can do?
5. The message challenged us to recognize that church membership, Bible knowledge, religious activity, and good works do not automatically mean someone trusts Christ. Why is it sometimes easier to rely on these outward things than to rest in what Jesus has done for us?

6. The message identified God's Word, Baptism, Communion, and Christian community as gifts through which the Holy Spirit sustains us. Which of these gifts has been especially meaningful to you during a difficult season? How have you experienced God using them to encourage or strengthen you?
7. Ernest Shackleton and his crew faced a much longer and more difficult journey than they anticipated. Where have you experienced an unexpected delay or difficult season in life? How did God provide for you during that time? What did you learn about depending on him?
8. The message ended by asking who we know might be struggling with waiting for Jesus to return. Who in your life might be weary, discouraged, or uncertain about faith? What could you say or do this week to encourage that person with the promises of Christ?

Life Application

This week, identify one person who might be experiencing a season of waiting, discouragement, uncertainty, or spiritual weariness. Rather than simply offering advice or telling them to try harder, find a way to share a promise of God with them.

You might:

- Send them a Scripture verse that has encouraged you.
- Invite them to worship or Bible study.
- Pray with them or let them know you're praying for them.
- Share a time when God's promises sustained you through a difficult season.
- Simply listen and remind them that they aren't alone.

Remember: We cannot believe for someone else, but we can encourage one another by pointing each other toward Jesus.

Key Takeaways

1. The Christian life is lived in the meantime. We live between Christ's first coming and his promised return. Waiting can be difficult, but Jesus has promised that he will come again.

2. Being ready doesn't mean never getting tired. Faith isn't measured by how spiritually energetic or emotionally strong we feel. We can lean on Christ's promises even when we're weary.

3. Faith cannot be borrowed or manufactured. Church membership, religious knowledge, family background, and good works cannot substitute for personal trust in Jesus.

4. The Holy Spirit sustains us through God's gifts. God works through his Word, Baptism, Communion, and Christian community to create, strengthen, and sustain faith.

5. We wait with hope because God is faithful. Our confidence isn't in our ability to prepare ourselves for Jesus' return. Our confidence is in Christ, who has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the promise that you will come again. We confess that waiting is not always easy. Sometimes we grow tired, discouraged, distracted, and uncertain. Sometimes we put our confidence in our own efforts, our religious habits, or the things we can see rather than in your promises.

Forgive us and turn our hearts toward you. Thank you for giving us faith as a gift and for sustaining us through your Word, our Baptism, Communion, and the community of believers. When we grow weary, remind us that we are not alone and that your promises remain true.

Give us opportunities to encourage those who are struggling and to share the hope we have in you. Keep us faithful as we wait, not through our own strength, but through the work of your Holy Spirit. Come, Lord Jesus! Until that day, help us live with joy and eager expectation, trusting that you will do exactly what you have promised.

In your name we pray. Amen.

We don't wait for Jesus by trying to make ourselves worthy of his coming. We wait as people who have received his grace, are sustained by his gifts, and look forward to the fulfillment of his promise.

Joy Lutheran Church