Church At Home
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Pentecost 24 November 8, 2026

Prayer of the Day
O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 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, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Homily – Pastor Jim Goos

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen

According to Pastor Kimberley van Driel, a Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania, this parable was one of the best loved Bible stories in the Middle Ages, and on into the 1500s and 1600s. Images of the bridesmaids were carved into cathedrals in Germany and France.

Today it is not so popular, perhaps because it seems to have a strong theme of judgment – one group of bridesmaids are judged as foolish, and in the end, the bridegroom does not welcome them to join the party because he does not know them.

However, a closer look at the parable suggests that judgment is not its primary message. The parable ends with the 5 foolish bridesmaids at the door of the bridegroom's house.

Because they didn't bring extra oil, they had to run out and buy some just as the bridegroom was arriving. By the time they get back, the bride and groom, along with the 5 wise bridesmaids and all of the guests are inside celebrating.

The 5 foolish bridesmaids knock on the door, the bridegroom answers, but says he doesn't know them. That sounds like judgment.

However, in other parables in Matthew's gospel - the wicked slave (24:45-51), the talents (25:14-30), and the sheep and the goats (25:30-46)—the dynamics of punishment and reward are clear. Lazy slaves are thrown out where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth; the goats who do not recognize him are cast into hellfire.

But in this parable, there is nothing suggesting that the bridegroom wants to punish the bridesmaids for their failures. It is just that he does not know who they are, and from his perspective there is no connection between him and them.

Throughout the Old Testament, wisdom and foolishness are not measures of intelligence. Rather, they are measures of one's relationship with God. Psalm 111:10 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; Psalm 14:1 tells us that the fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Fools don't believe in God; wise people build their lives on a relationship with God. That information helps us understand this parable.

Oil, flasks for storing the oil, lamps — are about relationship, and about how we maintain that relationship through a long night in which the bridegroom is not physically present and in which the wedding banquet/reception is just a promise. In this sense, the parable is less about a moment of harsh judgment than it is about what happens before that moment arrives.

This parable is exactly like the time in which we are living—the time between Jesus' resurrection and return. It has been 2000 years since Jesus said He was going to return. We have been called to the wedding party but the party hasn't actually started yet. In fact, it has been so long delayed that we could forget that that partying with Jesus is God's ultimate plan for us.

We (the church) could get bored, and like all 10 bridesmaids in the parable, fall asleep. So, even though we are in relationship with Jesus, it does not guarantee that our hearts and minds are constantly overjoyed and excited about the coming party. God's people can and do fall asleep.

The real question is how the church, God's wedding party, will stand up and proclaim Christ during this time of waiting for His arrival. But our witness to Christ is deeply grounded in our relationship with Christ. It's not a matter of our ingenuity or cleverness or success or planning.

What separates the wise bridesmaids from the foolish ones is that the wise understand that they cannot depend on what they have stored up within their own lamps to be ready for the decisive moment. They will need help, especially because the night can be long and the wait can be boring'

They need grace—extra oil that comes in flasks. The wise are wise not because they are naturally smarter than everyone else, but because they know that they cannot take care of a relationship with God on their own.

The "oil" that fills our lamps are the ways in which we experience the presence of Christ. Jesus comes to us in the waters of holy baptism (which we can remember every day), the bread and cup of holy communion (which we are able to receive regularly), the preaching of the word, regularly reading and studying our Bible, the ongoing support and prayers of other faithful people, and service to neighbors in whose face we see Christ, and in daily prayers and devotions.

All of these point to the festival banquet for which God has destined us. They fuel a light that serves to brighten a boring night and make us ready to respond faithfully when the cry comes.

There will always be people who prefer not to rely on grace. They are the foolish ones. When the cry goes up and it is time to light the lamps, the foolish discover they are not prepared. They have no relationship with Jesus. Even worse, they discover they cannot simply rely on the wise for help.

The foolish ask the wise to borrow their oil, only to discover that what they most need the wise can't share. "There won't be enough for you and for us!" the wise say. "You'd better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves."

The truth is, we cannot substitute for each other in terms of a relationship with Jesus, for He wants to give each one of us grace. I cannot be baptized in your place, and you cannot receive communion in mine.

The wise bridesmaids thus direct the foolish to the dealers, where they can get oil for themselves. The dealers can only be another symbol for Jesus. He is not only the bridegroom who will come again to party with us at the end, but he is also present with us now to keep us supplied with what we need.

Through this long night, he is available to keep us connected to himself, so we will be forgiven, hopeful, and ready for responsive mission whenever the cry comes. When we are well-supplied with his grace, there is no need to fear his return, for then we will be his bridesmaids, and he will know us.

Through our faith in Jesus and relationship with Jesus, Jesus abides in us and we in Him. Jesus is always with us, giving us new life, teaching us how to live as God's child, showing us ways to love and serve others, transforming us to become more and more like Him, and enabling us to be ready and waiting for His return.

He will not leave us out in the cold. He will welcome us into the eternal wedding banquet. Amen

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit let us pray as Jesus taught us……..

Lord's Prayer
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction
The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Dismissal
Go out in Joy. Encourage one another.
Thanks be to God.

STTLC Communique

In Our Prayers Today..... Casey Wierzbicki, Joanna Spencer, Marie Lenser, Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

Pastor Bruce will be on vacation from November 2 and returning on November 16. In the case of a pastoral emergency please call Pastor Jim Goos 613-401-8750.

Canada Lutheran Magazine – It's time to renew your subscription for 2027. Please let the church office know if you would like to renew. If you do not receive this magazine and would like to sign up, please contact the church office by November 15th. The new rates will be available in early December. For 2026, it was $19 + tax.

Eternity for Today Devotional Booklets – It's time to re-order the devotional booklets for 2027. If you are interested in receiving this booklet, let contact the church office by November 15th. If you already receive this booklet and want to continue, no further action is required. The congregation budget covers the cost of these booklets – however, donations via the offering envelope are welcome.

NOTICE OF MEETING

Fall Congregational Business Meeting
Sunday, November 22nd, 2026
Jubilee Hall
Following the Morning Service

Purpose of the Meeting:

- Update from Council Chairperson
- Treasurer's Report
- Elect members to Church Council vacancies and other positions
- Other Business
  - Bequest Update
  - Call Update

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