

Wait With Love

Sermon – December 18, 2022 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:1-13

Golden Verse: *“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him.”*

Luke 12:35-36

The word advent divides historical time into three parts.

1. In the Old Testament, Advent was the time waiting for the arrival and birth of the promised Saviour.
2. Today we are in Advent, waiting and preparing our human souls to receive Christ into our hearts.
3. And we are waiting for the fulfillment of the great promise, the return of Christ Jesus.

The first, the advent of the Old Testament, has already been fulfilled. The one they were waiting for has come. Jesus Christ was born.

The second advent for our souls becomes a reality as soon as our hearts are opened for the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ is ready to be born in you and in me again.

Also, we are waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. According to the words of Jesus Christ, His followers are like people who are waiting for their master when He comes, so as soon as He comes and knocks, they immediately open to Him.

Today, on the fourth Advent Sunday, we are focusing on His return. We are going to learn how to wait for His great arrival.

In this parable, Jesus illustrates a loving joyful meeting with the beautiful image of the wedding when the groom and the bride meet and start their loving and joyful journey, when love binds them permanently and inseparably.

The big question today is: are we really waiting for this moment, and are we waiting for it correctly?

In the parable, those ten people represent the members of the church, those who already know that Jesus is coming back, and they are waiting for His arrival. They represent those who claim to belong to the church community. So, the distinction between wise and foolish does not apply to those who are inside and those who are outside, but both types are within the church. The great warning lies precisely in

the fact that here, in the church, Jesus makes a distinction between wise and foolish church members. Jesus calls wise those who have oil in their lamps, and spare oil in their containers, and foolish are those who have oil only in their lamps but no reserve oil in a separate container. Those who have oil only in their lamps but they don't have oil reserved in a separate container miss the wedding at the crucial moment.

What is oil? Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Whether we can enter heaven depends on whether we already have the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. Paul says this very clearly in the letter to the Romans: *"Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ"* Romans 8:9.

We may have had a Christian education, we may have a Bible, and we may be outstanding members of Calvin Presbyterian Church: singing, praying, donating, and working for the church. But if we miss the Spirit of Christ, we might miss the great loving and joyful meeting with returning Christ.

So, the oil, the connection with Christ Jesus, is the Holy Spirit. I would like to highlight this.

The Bible says: *"No one can call Jesus Lord, but only by the Holy Spirit"* 1 Corinthians 12:3. Those who made Jesus the king of their lives, those who know that their sins have been forgiven, those who have oil in their lamps. The Spirit of Christ is in us if Christ is in us, and this can be seen through our way of thinking, our words, and our actions.

We know His warning: *"Not everyone who says to Me: 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My heavenly Father."* Matthew 7:21.

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" Matthew 7:24. Wise: this is the same word as the wise in our parable today. And those who hear these words and do not act accordingly are called foolish. In the parable, those persons who do not take care of the oil are called fools.

Please examine yourself based on your actions, based on your everyday lives, check whether you have oil in you, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.

The question goes even deeper. The five foolish virgins had oil in their lamps, but there was no spare oil reserved in their containers. It was not their lamps, but their storage containers that were empty for the rainy and dark days. It is not enough to have great enthusiasm in our hearts here and now, or around Christmas. Jesus might come back later. We need faith and love towards Him even when we are getting older and we might face more problems in our lives. Our faith, our lanterns, should not go out when we face more challenges such as suffering, sickness, or death.

I would like to give an example so that we can better see what it is like when we run out of reserve faith, or when we have enough.

I once heard this from someone: "I am stressed to the max and extremely bitter. I suffer a lot and I hurt. I lost everything, even my faith. My whole life has been a great ordeal." This is the situation when there is no spare oil in the container. He had oil in his lamp, but he ran out of spare oil. Now he is in darkness.

Another person was under similar very heavy mental and physical burdens. He said: "During my whole life I have always experienced that everything that God does is good. So far, I have received strength from above to endure the trials, and so I look with complete calmness and confidence towards this short life on earth, and then towards the welcoming eternal life". This person had oil not only when he was sitting in the pews but when he was laying in his sick bed. He is ready to stand before Christ and to see His glory. Some of these virgins were ready, ... some were not ready.

Are you ready? Do you have enough oil in your container - in your heart? Amen