



LENT (First Sunday)

March 10, 2019

SCRIPTURE READING - MATTHEW 25:1-13

¹ The Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ 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.' ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

REFLECTION

In the parable, the Virgin's lamps are handlamps made of fragile clay, and each one has a tiny bowl that only holds a little oil. In ancient times there were no lights along the street and should the oil in one's lamp burn out they would find themselves in pitch black dark. So as a safety measure people carried little flasks of oil, and if someone left their flask at home they were seen as foolish and called unwise. After all, without a light they might get lost and lose their way, and they even might get robbed by thieves who roamed the streets for victims at night. In short, the parable tells the reader, "Be responsible, for though you walk with others there are things you must do on your own."

As Christians we are called to walk together in community, and we are called to look out for one another with care and love as best we can. But there also comes a point where each of us is on our own, and we cannot depend on others to, as the parable puts it, "share their oil". We cannot look to others to do the works of faith for us, like going before the Lord in prayer or growing in the knowledge of His holy Word. And we cannot claim the relationship that others have with Jesus Christ, and use their faithfulness to His Way as a cover for the ways that we fall short.

In truth, we all must bring a flask of extra oil to refill our lamps, and we do this through our works of faith and a relationship with Christ that is our own. We must be like the wise Virgins who knew when they were on their own, and should our lamps begin to dim we must do our best to feed the flame. Nevertheless, if our flame should die and we find ourselves in pitch black dark, we can trust our gracious Father Who will come to us and give us light.

PRAYER

Gracious Father, Whose Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, we thank You for this First Sunday of Lenten journey and the things that You will to show us. As we walk with other believers and fellowship in life and faith, may we not forget the places and the paths that we must walk alone. May we be responsible for the works You have called us to do, and may we have a walk with Christ that truly is our very own. Father let us have the oil to fill our lamps when they go dim, and let our light inspire others to know Your love and walk with You. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.