

NOVEMBER 8, 2020; PENTECOST 20; SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson (Praise Team)

HYMN #155 “Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending” 9 am-Melody Four Quartet “Heaven Came Down” #1

PRAYER

CHILDREN’S SERMON: Lamp Oil...Matthew 25

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Amos 5:18-24*

*18 Woe to you who long
for the day of the LORD!*

*Why do you long for the day of the LORD?
That day will be darkness, not light.*

*19 It will be as though a man fled from a lion
only to meet a bear,
as though he entered his house
and rested his hand on the wall
only to have a snake bite him.*

*20 Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light-
pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?*

*21 "I hate, I despise your religious feasts;
I cannot stand your assemblies.*

*22 Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.*

*23 Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.*

*24 But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!*

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: Chosen by Carol

**SERMON TITLE: “CARRY EXTRA OIL”
Matthew 25:1-13; Pastor Tom Olson; November 8, 2020**

Dear Friends, Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

CHICK: Do any of you know what a “Chick Tract” is? They are gospel tracts done in a comic book story fashion. I am saved today due to the powerful influence of a Chick Tract called “THIS WAS YOUR LIFE.” We went to an eye doctor in La Crosse, Wisconsin when I was young and he had gospel literature in his waiting room. I sat there once and read this tract about a man who died and faced judgement and his life was reviewed. He clearly saw himself as a sinner and the thoughts he had about rejecting Jesus as his Savior. He was cast into hell. Another man in the tract confessed his sin and prayed to receive Jesus Christ as His Savior he died and went to heaven. This tract really caused me to think about the state of my soul and my need to believe in Jesus as my Savior. I invited Jesus to save me and He has never left me.

READY: I went on line and found that tract and re-read it now some 47 years later and I remember every bit of it vividly. I especially remember the feeling that I didn’t know when I would die and I needed to get ready before it was too late. Last Friday morning, when Tom Fugleberg went to Galilee Bible Camp to help cut down a tree, he had no idea it was his last day alive on earth. We need to be ready for we don’t know the day of our death or the day of Christ’s return.

PARABLE: This parable of the ten virgins and the lamps and oil helps us to take the return of Christ seriously...it is called the imminent return of Christ because it could be at any moment. Let’s look together at *Matthew 25:1-13*

I. INVITATION AND PREPARATION

Matthew 25:1-4 At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.

ALL: Notice that all types of people are invited to the wedding feast...both the wise and the foolish. This parable in the context of Matthew 24 and 25 points us to the return of Jesus for his “bride,” his church. There is going to be a celebration at that time when the “lover of our souls” is eternally united in heaven with those of us who love Him. No mind can conceive of the delicious food we will eat, the beautiful music we will hear and

the joy of the experience. All the sorrows of this life will be erased by the splendor of that event. As the song puts it, we will be “lost in wonder, love and praise.”

DELAY: Most every person I have ever talked to wants to go to heaven. They want to feast at the table of God. They want to experience the joy of the Lord. But many simply don't follow through and they put off their relationship with Christ until later.

LAMPS: I agree with the Bible commentators that say that the lamps represent the outward form of faith and religion and that the oil represents the grace of God and the Holy Spirit. I was confirmed with about a dozen young people who got up in front of the congregation with their nicest clothes on (I wore a bow tie!) and confessed their faith in Christ and joined the church as baptized and confirmed members. We all got a certificate and had the ever-important confirmation photo taken for the display in the church. We all had the lamps; we all had the outward form of religion. But most of the confirmands did not have any or enough oil in their lamps to get back to church the next Sunday. After they opened their confirmation gifts, they dropped out of church, some for decades, others for life.

UNEXCUSABLE: But on that great day of judgement, not one of us can say, “We were not invited to heaven.” Our pastor made the gospel call as clear as could be, he explained the redemption of Christ on the cross and repeatedly invited us to pray to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The gospel invitation has gone out to the world. Everyone here today is invited to receive the free gift of salvation, paid in full by the innocent blood of Jesus. Heaven is yours for the asking, the marriage supper of the Lamb is being prepared, perhaps even as we speak today!

II. UNEXPECTED WAIT

Matthew 25:5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

IMMINENT: Jesus always spoke of his return as if it could be any moment. The disciples and the Apostle Paul talk as if it would happen sometime between the ascension of Christ and the end of their lives. They fully expected Him to return quickly. But in this parable Jesus gives us the hint that his return would be a “long time in coming.” At least it seemed like a long time for the virgins awaiting the bridegroom. They thought it might be any moment or perhaps an hour. But the groom never came, perhaps for hours, and they all fell asleep.

HINT: There is one other passage in Scripture that implies that the return of Christ would be so far down the line that even the church would give up on looking for His return. *2 Peter 3:3&4 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."* There is one topic that many modern churches don't want to hear preaching about and that is the return of Jesus to “judge the living and the dead.” I am so glad we have the church year and the lectionary that brings us back to these important topics every year. We have waited almost 2,000 years for Christ to return. Will we wait another 1,000 years or will it happen soon? I don't know, but I do know we are in the days when people are saying it won't happen and we have had a long wait...so it is good to be ready.

III. UNEXPECTED RETURN

Matthew 25:6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'"

SLEEPING: Notice that even those who brought extra oil were sleeping when the cry rang out. Could this be the sleep of death? Or is this the sleep of worldliness? Or is this just the expected lack of awareness that comes

from waiting a long time? When the trumpet of God sounds, if it is in my lifetime, it will likely happen at a moment that I am busy doing something and am not expecting it.

BUSY: In fact, God wants to find us busy doing His work and will when He returns, whether that is changing diapers, cooking meals, preaching the gospel or harvesting crops in the field. God does not expect us to be praying but he desires us to be doing that which is wholesome... perhaps symbolized by the very normal sleep of those who are tired. Jesus is coming for those who “have longed for His appearing” but not necessarily “waiting around for his appearing.” I am going to live life to the fullest, while I expectantly wait for Jesus to return.

IV. CRISIS FOR SOME

Matthew 25:7-10 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 9 "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' 10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut."

TEST: This is what we might call the “time of testing.” Those who were prepared had extra oil so they could join the wedding procession in the dark of night and not stumble. But those who were not prepared had lamps that didn’t have the oil to make it to the destination. And then we see a great theological point here...note that they were unable to use the oil of the prepared ones. One commentator said that this reminds us that we can’t get to heaven on someone else’s grace. Or as others have said, “God has no grandchildren, only children.” The river of life that comes from knowing Jesus has to be your personal experience. Just because your friends have the Lord in their hearts, doesn’t mean you do. Some people kind of like being church members without really getting personal with Christ. They jump through the hoops and say the words but never receive the new birth from heaven. When push comes to shove, the going gets tough, the wait gets long, they have no real life to draw from and they just fall away.

PR: When I was in college, one of our music education professors said something like this to our class, “When you move to a small town and get a job as a music teacher, you must join the church and direct the choir. It is the price you have to pay to get the community support you need for your program.” Now that would be the example of a person who has a lamp, but no oil, and when the call of God comes does not have real salvation that endures persecution or opens the gates of heaven after death. You can’t borrow it from others. Do know for certain that your sins are forgiven and that Jesus is dwelling in your heart by faith? If not, today is the day of salvation...come to Christ this morning...don’t delay.

V. SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Matthew 25:11-13 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' 12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

RAPTURE: Our epistle lesson reminded us that the trumpet will sound, the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive and remain will meet the Lord in the air and always be with the Lord. Some people believe that this is the point of the final judgement and others of us believe that this is just the removal of believers from the earth at which point the “great tribulation” will begin on earth while we experience the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.

DOOR: What door are these young women pounding on? Are they in the great tribulation and asking Christ to rapture them up to heaven now that they really believe, because they now have the extra oil? Are they souls wanting to be a part of the millennia kingdom that must wait until they are raised at the end of the 1,000 years? Or are they folks who are eternally blocked out of heaven? I don't know for certain. But one thing I do know is that I don't want to run out of oil and be one of them!

LEFT: Sharon's dad was reflecting on life with us the other day...sharing memories. There were seven kids in the family and one night after an evening service at church they went home and realized that one child was missing. He got left behind. They went back to the church and little Mark was peacefully sleeping in one of the pews.

HERECY: The false teachers in the early church were telling people that the return of Christ had already happened that that they all got left behind. *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

SIGNS: We can see that the "spirit of lawlessness" is coming on the earth. But I don't think we have seen who the "man of lawlessness" is yet. Nor has the temple been rebuilt. But things are headed in that direction. All the necessary preparations have been made in Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the temple. Things are coming together. So what should we be doing? We need to be filling up our lamps and containers with the oil of God so we have what it takes to wait for the coming of Christ.

VINE: I don't know of any passage that better tells us how to do this than *John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* God has given us the "means of grace: baptism, communion and His written Word." Come regularly to hear the gospel, come to the Lord's table, have personal time in the Word and prayer at home...cultivate your relationship with Jesus...walking with Him, talking with Him. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then when the trumpet sounds, you may be sleeping but you will be ready to go. Wouldn't that be wonderful to go to bed at night and wake up in heaven with the Lord? It is all possible because of His amazing love for us and the grace that flows from the cross of Calvary. Amen

SONG ON CD: "Coming Again" Melody Four Quartet #12 Both Services

PRAYER & 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 that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

CLOSING CHORUS: chosen by Carol; 9 am Vagle Brothers "Doxology" #19

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson