The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
November 8, 2026
Text: Matthew 25:1-13
"Are You Ready for the Bridegroom?"

Nate Soares is betting on the end of the world coming before he has a chance to retire. About ten years ago, this former Google engineer stopped saving money for his retirement because he believes that Artificial Intelligence will soon annihilate humanity. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die?

No one on earth really knows the future, but most of us do fear an untimely end. We live in a world of fear, haunted by all kinds of threats to our existence. The Doomsday Clock, maintained since 1947 by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, presently sits with 1 minute and twenty-five seconds remaining until midnight, the time that symbolizes global destruction.

It should not surprise us, then, that these last few Sundays of the Church Year can initially trigger some anxiety for us as we listen together to the Word of the Lord. These are the Sundays of the End, for the Scriptures also affirm what we all naturally fear. The end of this world, as we know it, is coming. But it will not come in the way that most people think.

The parable we heard in today's Gospel reading, is part of Jesus' teaching about the End. Jesus told His disciples that this world will come to an end, but not as the catastrophic consequence of human violence,

technological chaos, or ecological disaster. The universe is God's creation. He rules over it; He always has, He always will, and that is good news for us all.

None of today's apocalyptic worries take the fact of God's reign into account. Humanity is bound by the vain notion that since we are responsible for so much of the danger in this world, we must save ourselves by solving the problems that threaten to destroy us. That is a recipe for perpetual global distress and despair. Think big, give it all you've got, or tomorrow we all die.

But Jesus says no to that. He taught His disciples to see, in the world's troubles, not problems to be solved, but heaven-sent signs that God is at work, moving His fallen creation to an end that will usher in a new, eternal beginning. Jesus came to deliver all of God's creation from its bondage to sin and death. After sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam, God subjected all that He had made to the dark, spiritual power of sin, death, and the deceiver, but He also gave the promise that He would set things right through the suffering of one of Eve's offspring (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus is Eve's promised offspring. In Him, God the Son entered His evil-stricken creation to confront, overcome, and destroy the power of sin and death forever. The Eternal Son united Himself with our race in the person of Jesus, Mary's boy. Baptized by John in the Jordan and anointed

with the Holy Spirit, Jesus faced and defeated the devil in the wilderness before travelling throughout the land to call the people of Israel to repent of their sins and to believe that God reigned through the words Jesus preached and the works He performed.

Christ's greatest act of power looked like nothing but weakness, loss and failure, for on the cross Jesus suffered and died under heaven's condemnation for all the sin of the world. With His perfect obedience and the sacrifice of His body and blood, Jesus satisfied the righteousness of God's law, robbing the devil of his power to rule humanity with lust, accusation, guilt and fear, delivering all of God's creatures from that bondage. Raised from the dead and exalted to heaven, Jesus reigns over the heavens and the earth. From Him, the Holy Spirit comes to preach the news of Christ's reign and to call people to confess their sins and to trust Jesus' promise of forgiveness and eternal life.

Since ancient times, Christians have confessed, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." Jesus' saving work for the world is, at one and the same time, complete, ongoing, and yet to be fully consummated.

Christ died: the death of Jesus has taken away the sins of the world. In Him, there is redemption and forgiveness of sins for all people. Salvation is God's gift for all.

Christ is risen: our Lord lives, never more to die, and He reigns by His power and grace over all of His creation. The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent, works repentance and faith in people through the ministry of the Church's preaching, baptizing, and serving of the Lord's Supper. Thus the Spirit pours out God's saving grace in this world, proclaiming Jesus' reign, delivering sinners from the darkness, and purifying for the Lord a people for his own possession who are eager to serve Him.

Christ will come again: at a time known to God alone, Jesus will appear in power and glory to pronounce eternal judgment on all of His enemies and to raise His redeemed people to eternal life with Him. Then, all the troubled and troublesome kingdoms of this world will come to their end, while the kingdom of God and His Christ will remain forever. Thus, the end of this old world will mean the full commencement of the new one in which righteousness will dwell forever.

When will Christ come again? We do not know, and that was why Jesus taught His disciples the parable of God's kingdom that we heard as this morning's reading from the Gospel of Matthew, popularly known as the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

It is story of ten women gathered together for a joyous event - a wedding. They are chosen to play a role in the wedding ceremony: they will escort the bridegroom to the wedding, and because it is planned for

nighttime, they will light the way for him by carrying the oil lamps that they have brought for the occasion.

All the virgins were chosen for this honour, but only half of them were well prepared for the task. Five had wisely brought a supply of extra oil, while the others foolishly came with only their lamps. While waiting together for the bridegroom to arrive, they all fell asleep. They were awakened by the announcement of bridegroom's arrival, and as they prepared to meet him, the foolish ones realized that they needed more oil than they had with them in order to fulfil their responsibility. The wise ones refused their request of a loan of their oil and advised them to go and buy some from a merchant. This the women did, but that made them late in returning to wedding venue; they had missed out on the procession and were locked out of the feast. When they knocked on the door, the bridegroom turned them away with the chilling saying, "I do not know you."

If Jesus had stopped His teaching here we might wonder what He was telling us about the future of the kingdom of heaven. But He gave the parable a conclusion: "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." So the parable teaches us about the return of Jesus. He is the bridegroom coming to wed His bride.

Paul used marriage as a picture to illustrate the relationship between Jesus and the Church. In Ephesians 5, he writes: *"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might*

sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Vss. 25-27). To encourage Christian husbands to love their wives, Paul holds up Jesus' sacrificial service to the Church as a holy example. He implies that Jesus is the Husband of His people, and they are together, His wife. Revelation also depicts the return of Jesus for His church as a bridegroom coming for His bride (Rev. 19).

Jesus' parable reflects both His promise that He will come to live with His bride forever and His warning for those who await that time to be ever ready for His return.

That promise was given to us when we are baptized, for it is in that way that the Holy Spirit makes us one Jesus our Lord. Through baptism, we were made to share in all that is Christ's, since He, by becoming human, took as His own all that belongs to us. *"For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Such is the love of Jesus for us, that He took and suffered for all that we are, so that He might give to us all that He is! When Christ returns His promise will be fulfilled with our resurrections and the renewal of all creation. The hope of that day fills us with eager anticipation for that glorious day.

The parable also warns us that since our Bridegroom's coming may be delayed, we also have need of a sufficient supply of oil. What might that oil stand for in the parable? Oil was used to anoint God's servants to mark them as His chosen ones, and it can symbolize the Holy Spirit who fills us with faith to hold steadfastly to God's promise of salvation and bear Christ-like fruit in life. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, but He also comes to us through the ministry of the preached Word and the administration of the Sacraments to help us to live holy lives in the hope of His coming.

Together we trust in Jesus Christ, for He has loved us and given Himself for us, so that we might be His forever. As we come regularly to hear God's Word, receive His saving gifts, call upon His name, and sing His praise, the Holy Spirit fills and sanctifies us, so that we live in watchful hope, praying for our Bridegroom's arrival. For then we will be with Him forever. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.