

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost, 2008 (Proper 27A)

Text: Matthew 25:1-13

Title: Daddy's Home!

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Daddy's Home! As soon as those words hit her little eardrums, she's up off the couch and heading towards the door as fast as her little legs can carry her. Before Daddy can even set down his bag, she leaps up into his arms. She wraps her arms tightly around his neck, and nearly strangles him. She snuggles up into his strong arms. She plants a huge kiss on his cheek and begins to tell her Daddy everything that he's missed in the past week. He's been away on business. And even though it's only been a week, to her, it's been a lifetime. But she knew that Daddy was coming home. Mommy had helped her count the days and now He's home and nothing can separate her from her Daddy.

Daddy's Home! As soon as those words hit his little eardrums, he's up off the couch and running. But, he's not running towards the door. He's running to his room. He slams the door and looks for a place to hide. He knows what's coming. He's been a very naughty little boy. He's been mean and selfish and mouthy. He's been getting into fights at school and talking back to his teachers. He hasn't been listening to Mom, either. She's tried every punishment she can think of, but nothing seems to work. Finally, she gave up and said, "Just wait until your Father gets home." So when Daddy finally arrives, he heads in the opposite direction. Maybe he can buy enough time to think up an excuse or some way to talk his way out of this one.

"Daddy's home," The same words, but the reactions could not have been more different. For the little girl, they were the best, sweetest, most glorious words that she ever heard. They fill her heart with joy and happiness. For the little boy, the words brought fear and an impending sense of doom.

"The Groom is here." The same words, but the reactions could not have been more different. For five of the virgins, this is wonderful news. Their long wait is finally over, now is the time for the wedding celebration. For the other five virgins, these words bring fear and panic. They realize that they're not ready, that they're not prepared. They realize that there's a chance they might be left out.

The virgins (think bridesmaids) have all been waiting all day and most of the night for the party to start. It's been a long day- they had to get their hair and makeup done, get dressed and then go to the bride's house to wait.

The wedding would have gone something like this: The groom, together with his friends and family prepare for the wedding at his house. Everyone gets dressed up, and the wedding banquet is prepared. At sundown, everyone from the groom's side goes across town to the bride's house. At the bride's house, the actual wedding ceremony takes place, and the bride is given to her

husband in marriage. After the ceremony, everyone processes back to the groom's house, and the wedding feast begins.

So the virgins have had a long day already. They've probably spent the day with bride helping her get ready. Helping the family get the house ready. It's understandable that they might doze off, especially if the groom is a little late.

Some of these virgins are ready. They've planned ahead. Not only did they remember to bring their lamps for the procession, but they also have plenty of oil.

They've been waiting for this wedding for a long time now. They were so happy for their friends when they first got betrothed. They were so honored that they were invited and asked to be a part of their friends' special day. They've done everything they could to make sure that this is the happiest day of their lives.

So when the cry rings out, "The Bridegroom is Here!" They are excited, they are overjoyed. The moment is finally here. No more planning, no more getting ready, no more waiting. Time for the wedding. Time for the party.

Now the other five virgins had a different reaction. When the cry rings out, "The Bridegroom is Here!" They are frantic. They reach for their lamps, but realize that they're out of oil. Without oil, the lamps won't work. Without a lamp, you can't be in the procession. If you're not in the procession, they you might not make it in to the wedding feast.

So they beg their friends, but no one has any oil to spare. They have to run down to the Walmart and see if they can buy some before it's too late. When they finally get the oil, get the lamps going and find out where they need to be, it's too late. They've missed the wedding. They've missed the procession. The door is shut, and it's locked. They ring the doorbell, they knock until their knuckles are sore, but it's all to no avail. If you're not in the procession, you don't get in. You're left outside. If you're not ready when the groom arrives, then there's no second chances. You're either ready or you're not. You're either in or you're out.

We're down to the last three weeks of the church year. And we're down to Jesus' last three stories. This week it's the ten virgins. Next week it will be the talents, and the last week it's the sheep and the goats. All three stories are about the end. All three stories are about Jesus' return, and what it will be like.

In each story there are two groups of people, and only two. This week- the wise virgins and the foolish virgins. Next week- those who put the gifts they're given to work, and those who don't. And the last week- the sheep and the goats.

The point of this week's story is clear. Jesus comes right out and tells you, "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

You do not know exactly when Jesus will return. Every week we confess that Jesus is coming back. Every week we confess that He will come again to judge the living and the dead. Are you

ready? If the Lord came back right now, would you be prepared? Would you be glad to see Him? If you heard the cry right now, “The bridegroom is here!” Which direction would you run? Would you run joyfully into His arms and give Him a hug, or would you run the other way and hide?

There’s no reason for any of us here to fear the Lord’s return. The Lord Himself has prepared you, He has made you ready to meet Him.

It all began at your baptism. In Holy Baptism you were given your lamp and more oil than you would ever need. You were given a burning candle and these words were spoken: “Receive this burning light. Live always by the light of Christ, and be ever watchful for his coming that you may meet him with joy and enter with him to the marriage feast of the Lamb in his kingdom, which shall have no end.”

The Lord has made you His light. You are the light of the world. Throughout your life He has kept your light burning. There may be times when your lamp seems to flicker, when it’s dangerously close to going out, when you begin to feel empty, and the darkness is closing in all around you.

But that’s when He brings you back here, to fill you once more with His Holy Spirit. In the Divine Service, the Lord tops off your tank, refills your store of oil, and you leave this place with your lamp shining more brightly than ever.

But one day the night will come. The night will come and you will fall asleep. The night comes for all of us when we fall asleep in the Lord. We will lie in wait for the last day when Christ, our bridegroom appears. You will awake when the last trumpet sounds, when the Lord returns with a shout of triumph.

And that will be a joyful moment for you. Your long wait will be over. It will be time for the celebration to begin.

You will either be ready, or you won’t. There’s no in-between. The virgins are either wise or foolish. There are no in-betweens. There are no C students. You are either in or you’re out.

Those who belong to the Lord are ready. He has made you ready. He has made you wise. He has given you more than enough oil for the procession. He’s invited you to His banquet and He has a place ready for you at the party.

But there will be those who don’t get in. There will be those who think that they can smile their way through. Those who figure that they’ll take care of things at the last minute, that God couldn’t possibly leave them out in the cold. They will be faced with the harsh reality of God’s justice. Those who try to make it on their own will be utterly lost. “I tell you the truth, I do not know you.”

Our world is filled with people who aren’t ready, with people who will try to make it on their own, to get by on their own resources. Many of your friends and neighbors aren’t ready. When

the Lord returns, it will be a day of fear and panic and dread. But there's still time, there's still time for us not only to prepare ourselves, but to prepare those around us for the Lord's return.

You don't want to see them left out. You don't want them to find themselves outside looking in. You want them in the banquet hall, enjoying the party. You want them to be ready, you want them to experience the joy of our Lord's return.

So get the word out! Christ is coming back. We don't know the day or the hour, which makes it even more urgent. Don't delay. Don't procrastinate. Don't put it off another day. If you know someone who may not be ready, for God's sake, tell them, warn them, encourage them, spread the word. Our Lord is returning. For those who are ready, it will be a happy time of rejoicing, but for those who aren't ready, it will be a terrifying ordeal.

So watch, be ready. Our Lord is coming, but we do not know the day or the hour. Keep your lamps ready. Return here regularly to fill your lamp with oil and prepare for our Lord's return, so that when the cry goes out, "The Bridegroom is here!" we all go running to meet him, as fast as our little legs can carry us.