

## Last Sunday

*The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you." . . . Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*

Here in this life, there are constantly people around to come to your rescue.

Family and friends can always supply and cover for you.

If a kid forgets his homework or lunch bag, parents can bring it.

If you do something embarrassing, others can cover up your shame.

If someone can't get out to get food, neighbors can bring it.

If you have a sick day, others can cover for you.

This is good and Christian, for God sets us in families here on earth.

The "buddy-system" is the way that God intends to provide for your physical needs. But it does have its limitations.

The buddy-system is for our life on earth and will not work to cover your faults before the face of God.

Nevertheless, we get so used to relying on each other and covering for one another, that the words of today's parable are a jarring wake-up call.

*The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered saying, "No."*

No? No?! What ever happened to Christian love and sharing?

Where is the Christian generosity and willingness to cover for another's sin?

But the wise virgins are not willfully denying help.

Rather, it is just the simple truth.

When you stand before God in judgment, it is final, it is sudden and it is personal.

It is personal in that there is no place to turn for help.

You are either ready or not. Don't think that you can rely on others.

There is no excusing yourself by pointing to the sins of others and saying, "look, they're doing it too! Why are you picking on me??"

There is no complaining and saying, "It's his fault! He told me to do it."

But see and tremble how the Lord shut out fully half of his bridesmaids because of such foolishness. They were not helped by the preparedness of the others.

When you tremble at this, you can also see that the judgment does not only come at the last day.

Judgment also comes in the solitude of your accusing conscience.

There is just the judgment. There is only the awful words, "*Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you. . . and the door is shut.*"

This reality of the sudden day of judgment ought to make you earnestly take thought for your life now, in the day of grace.

All thoughts of laziness and procrastination are driven away.

To yawn and say, "Don't worry, I'll be ready," is a deadly attitude. "*For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them.*"

Then there is no more opportunity to fall back and get your life together.

The judgment is final. Don't think that everything you do is "next-to-last."

"I can sin now because God always forgives. What I do at this moment and the decisions I make don't really matter..."

To dispel that notion, ask yourself what you will say when God barges in to catch you in the shameful act.

The judgment is sudden like that. Don't put off repentance until tomorrow.

"I'm young. I've got plenty of time. I'll do what I please now, and I can always repent of it tomorrow."

To rid yourself of these notions, think of all the sudden tragedies that occur every day that can end your life in an instant.

Also consider that the end of the world is at hand.

You might laugh at the silliness of those who try to predict the time of the last day.

But you are just as silly when you predict that the end is not today.

The finality, suddenness and aloneness of the judgment was shared by Jesus.

Jesus lived His life with finality—no mucking around in sin while He sought "the greater good." He just rolled up His sleeves and did what the Father said.

He did not blame His predicament on others but he faced God's terrible judgment alone and forsaken of God.

In this He received your judgment and was condemned in order to rise and give you new life.

And that is what today is all about. Jesus comes to you now. Not tomorrow.

He does not say, "sit tight, I'll get around to rescuing you later." He just comes.

And when He comes Jesus calls you to repentance—not indulgence.

He comes to take your sins from you—not to make excuses for you.

He comes to give you the true certainty of His forgiveness—not the false security of comparative righteousness.

Since, in the final judgment, the advice and prodding of others won't be taken into account, the Gospel isn't concerned with your excuses only with your repentance and Christ's forgiveness.

And Jesus speaks this forgiveness to you individually. The Gospel is greater than a general broadcast that "I'm OK—you're OK."

It is rather an absolution spoken to you alone. Saying:

"I have died for you. I have lived for you. I now speak to you.

"Don't look around to see if others are believing.

"Don't wonder if I might be saying these things to others too.

"Right now—right here I say to you, 'I forgive your sins.

"I prepare you for the day of judgment.

"I invite you to feast with Me. I find you worthy and well prepared to eat and drink my body and blood. Come into the wedding feast with Me."

The false security that judgment is still a long way off is now replaced with the knowledge that you stand righteous before the judge today.

The false security that the sins of others somehow lessen the impact of your own is replaced with the knowledge that the righteousness of Christ is now yours.

Believe these words, eat this food, rejoice in this fact and know that this is all the proof you need that Jesus will also say to you at the last:

"Come into my mansion and live with Me forever with all the saints and angels."