

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 8, 2020

The young women in the Lord's parable are not described as being good or bad, right or wrong, saved or lost, saints or sinners. The two groups are described as the wise and the foolish. To understand the difference between the two, we look at chapter seven in Matthew's gospel. There Jesus said, "Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on rock...Anyone who hears my words but does not put them into practice is like the foolish man who built his house on sandy ground." Therefore, to be wise or foolish depends on whether we are putting Christ's words into practical everyday actions of mercy, compassion, justice, and peace. We are wise when we base our lives on the simplest form of Christ's teaching, which is to love God and to love neighbor. The oil in the parable may symbolize a Christian lifestyle that fuels our baptismal mandate to be "children of the Light."

On one level, this parable is about how God comes into our lives in Christ and how we must be vigilant and prepared to welcome him whenever he comes. Christ enters our lives many times and in many ways. Yet, Christians in the first century became preoccupied with the final entrance of Christ, His second coming in power and glory. They were convinced that He would return during their lifetime. That expectation impacted every aspect of life as you would expect. It also created a sense of urgency in living the faith. After waiting for two thousand years, it's clear that the timetable for the Lord's return was not accurate. St. Paul was already addressing the concerns of the Thessalonian church about the Lord's delayed second coming. Still, we believe that Christ will return in glory. We just don't know when.

So, the question is, what do we do in the meantime? We probably need to expand our expectations of Christ's entry into our lives. Christ comes to us in everyday life in prayer, Eucharist, Scripture, community, and in service to others. Christ comes to us in our troubled times, our pains and sorrows, to comfort and strengthen us. And Christ will come to us in our individual end time, our death, to welcome us to the table of God's children in heaven.

Commenting on today's scriptures, Fr. Roland Faley writes, "A good life always reckons with the Lord who is close at hand. And the fact is that we have everything to look forward to. Happiness is not a difficult subject for reflection. What we look forward to, we will prepare for as well. It's a wise thing to do." (Footprints on the Mountain, p.714)

Fr. Valentine

Scripture Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/110820.cfm>