**Notes for Next Sunday**

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – 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!**

The “day of the Lord” will be a time when God will show himself the victor over the world, vindicating his claims to be the Lord over all the earth. Israel wrongly expected to be exalted as a nation and longed for that day to come. Amos warned that the day would come, but not as Israel expected—it would be a day of “darkness, not light” (v. 20) for her, because she had not been faithful to God. Amos speaks primarily of an imminent and decisive judgment on Israel, not exclusively of the last day.

In verses 21-23 though Israel may continue to offer the worship described in these verses, it will do no good. Where simple justice and humility are lacking, even the most orthodox ritual and the finest of music is nothing more than a hypocritical sham. (TLSB)

God’s people are to produce justice continually and swiftly, like the flow of a river from their heart filled with faith in God. Just as plants and animals need a steady supply of water to survive, so also human communities can flourish only when justice and righteousness prevail. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 25:1-13

*The Parable of the Ten Virgins*

“**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. ﻿5﻿ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ﻿6﻿ “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ ﻿7﻿ “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. ﻿11﻿ “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.**

This part of Matthew’s Gospel is perfectly placed as Jesus prepares for his most important work yet—the cross. In chapter 24 Jesus speaks about signs of the end. Then in chapter 25 he emphasizes the need to be ready by teaching three parables, including our text. He begins with the parable of the ten virgins, then the parable of the talents, and finally, the parable of the sheep and goats, last week’s Gospel. This emphasis by Jesus can never be taken too lightly.

*V. 1* *kingdom of heaven. “*Kingdom of God” is used by the other Gospel writers. Matthew uses this because he was addressing Jews and they were very careful not to over use or misuse the name of God. They both mean the spiritual realm of God.

*V. 1 ten virgins.* These could be thought of as the church on earth. The bridesmaids were responsible for preparing the bride to meet the bridegroom.

*V. 1* *lamps.* These were torches that consisted of a long pole with oil-drenched rags at the top.

*V. 2* *foolish virgins did not take oil with them.* Conversion must be coupled with faithful perseverance. Coming to faith will do you no good if you do not stand firm to the end (Mt. 24:13).

*V. 5 bridegroom was a long time in coming.* Many early Christians expected Jesus’ return in their generation. This parable implies that Jesus might not come as quickly as some expected, while encouraging the Church not to lose hope. (TLSB)

*V. 6 at midnight.* The Jews often expected the Messiah to arrive at midnight, the time of the Passover visitation. The arrival at midnight certainly should not be taken as a literal prediction. The bridegroom suddenly appears when many eyes are heavy. (TLSB)

*V. 9 no they replied.* The fact that all must fend for themselves underscores the individuality of the Christian faith. We cannot rely on the merits or faith of others or the intercession of saints.

*V. 10 marriage feast*. The future glory of heaven is repeatedly compared to the joy and intimacy of a wedding feast (cf 22:1–14; Is 25:6–9).(TLSB)

*V. 11 Lord, lord* … *I do not know you*. These words echo 7:21–23, where Jesus warns His audience that He will recognize and admit into the kingdom of heaven only those who do the will of His Father which is to believe in him. (TLSB)

*V. 13 keep watch.* The Lord adds the solemn warning of chapter 24:42 once more, urging constant, ceaseless watchfulness, since the day and the hour of His coming is hidden from the knowledge of men. To summarize: The bridegroom is Jesus Christ, John 3:29. The feast is the blessedness of heaven prepared for all His true followers. The foolish virgins are such as have indeed received faith, but have kept only its outward semblance, hoping to find acceptance on the strength of past merits. The wise virgins are such as are careful about providing and keeping fuel for their faith, in order that their lamps may not be extinguished at a critical time. The oil is the grace and salvation of God offered and given in the Word, by the work of the Holy Ghost. The bridegroom is apparently delaying His coming, 2 Pet. 3:9. But He will surely make His appearance for the last great judgment at a time when He is least expected. At that time every one will stand or fall with his own faith, and those that are lacking in its power must accept the fate which they have brought upon themselves

A healthy faith is a faith that is constantly ready for the Day of the Lord.