Jesus Gazing

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November 8, 2026
INI - SDG

Matthew 25:1-13 Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 "Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. 3 "Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 "And at midnight a cry was *heard*:`Behold, the bridegroom is coming[1]; go out to meet him!' 7 "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 "And the foolish said to the wise,`Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 "But the wise answered, saying,`*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying,`Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 "But he answered and said,`Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour[1] in which the Son of Man is coming.

Years ago, I was talking to an auto mechanic in Madison. I admitted that I sometimes go a couple hundred miles over before getting our oil changed. The man replied saying that was nothing. He said that they often get people coming in five or ten thousand miles past the oil change.

It is easy to think that I can go a few more miles, but before you know it a few miles is a thousand or ten thousand. It is easy to think it doesn't really matter that car is running fine. But if your oil is causing noticeable problems its already way too late. In the same way it is easy to put off coming to worship, family devotions and personal prayer, one more day you think isn't going to matter. Before you know it, it has been a year or ten years. In the same way it is easy to think that it doesn't make a difference. But by the time it's a problem its often already too late.

There Jesus says to watch. Watch that your oil is full today. When Jesus tells us to "watch," he is using the word the way your mechanic would you tell you to watch your oil. Keep on eye on it. Check the levels. Make sure you are ready and prepared.

Be Prepared
Keep your oil full. Always be ready because you do not know the day or the time when the groom will come.

The key word in our text today is "watch." With this word Jesus doesn't mean that you should stand around staring at the sky. Rather he means that we should always be prepared. The difference between the wise and the foolish is not that the wise were awake and watching but that they were ready. Before they went to sleep, they made sure they had enough oil.

1 Peter 5:8-9 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

When I was in Germany at the German Free Conference. Some of the pastors at that conference were obsessed with the book of Revelation. They wanted to find out what each word meant. They wanted to know exactly what all these things mean, so that would know we he is coming.

“We have to be ready.”

But that isn't at all what Jesus tells us in our text. He tells us to **always be ready**. Watching for Jesus isn't a matter of knowing all the signs. It is a matter of making sure you are **always ready**.

The women, wise and foolish, are peacefully sleeping. No one misses it when the groom arrives. All are awakened and told that he is here. We don't need to set our alarms to make sure we know when he is coming. We simply need to make sure we are prepared before going to bed.

We are vigilant (watchful) when we stand firm in the faith, not when we stand staring at the sky.

When the disciples saw Jesus ascend into heaven, they stood there watching the sky. The Angel came down to tell them there was no need to watch the sky. Jesus will come again, and you will not miss him when he comes again. The important thing is to go get those things done which need to be done.

If you are having company over to your house, you don't need to stand at the door watching for them. You know that when they arrive, they will ring the doorbell. Rather than standing at the door, you can prepare. Clean the house. Cook supper. Hide the dirty laundry in a closet.

This is what the angel is saying to the apostles. Don't stand staring at the sky. Go get the things done you need to do to be prepared. Even though Jesus tells us to "watch" what he really means is that we should always be prepared.

Watch therefore in this context means, not to stand guard, but to be prepared.

1 Peter 4:7 7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Search His Word
How are we to prepare?
If your star gazing you look up in the sky. If you are Jesus gazing you look in his word.
The oil is the means of Grace that is God’s word and sacraments. The wise are prepared because their lamps are filled with oil. When we are filled with the means of grace we are prepared.

There is a beautiful picture of this in Zechariah chapter four, and again the picture is repeated in Revelation chapter 11. The picture is of two olive trees and from the olive trees comes two pipes, which feed seven lamps. And the Lord says these two olive trees are My two anointed ones. The two anointed ones the Lord is speaking of are the priest and the prophet. One who speaks the word, and the one who gives the sacrifices. The Old Testament church was a sacrificial church. It centered around the sacrifices and the Word which gave the forgiveness of sins. In the NT we are no longer a sacrificial church but a sacramental church. The sacrifices looked ahead to the coming of Jesus. The sacraments look back. But both give the forgiveness of sins. They do this not because of the ritual but because of the promise of

God. Sacrament and the Word these are those things which feed and cause faith to grow and live within us.

It is those who live in the word and the sacraments are who are wise. It is they who have plenty of oil ready and waiting for the Lord's return. It is those who despise the Word and the sacraments whose faith dims and fades. They will find on the last day that their oil was used up and their faith faded away without them realizing.

Test Your Soul
The best way to prepare is to practice.

On August 17th 1943, the USAAF 3rd and 1st Air Division were supposed to work together to bomb Schweinfurt. Colonel Curtis LeMay commander of the 3rd division was worried about the possibility of fog. He relentlessly forced his men to practice taking off in low visibility situations. General Robert Williams, commander of the 1st division, did not. The 3rd division was ready and took off without a problem regardless of the dense fog. The 1st division was not ready. They were stuck on the ground for three hours while they waited for the fog to lift.

The best way to be prepared is to practice.

Luther reminds us what it means to be prepared in his catechism.

"He is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these simple words, 'given and shed for you for the remission of sins.' Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say."

In the same way we are truly prepared for Jesus coming on the last day. This is how we check the oil of our faith. We examine ourselves. We ask ourselves am I a sinner? How can I be saved? What has Jesus done for me? When we examine ourselves, we should find that we are sinners, but that Jesus has given us salvation. If that is what we find we are ready.

The wise virgins aren't saved because they are better than the foolish, but because they held on to the righteousness that Jesus gave them. It is the oil that keeps their light burning.

Revelation 16:15 15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

Every time I read this verse, I'm expecting an adjective. Keeps his garments *clean* or *white*. I have to reread it to realize there is no adjective. We are simply to keep the garments. We need to hold on to them.

Revelation is referring to the robes of righteousness that Jesus gives us through his death. It is not up to us to make them or to keep them clean, only to hold on to them. We remember the parable of the king's wedding feast. In that parable the man who lost his robe was cast out into outer darkness.

When Jesus tells us to watch, be prepared, he is telling us to simply check that we still have our white robes. Check that we are covered in the righteousness which he has given to us. Without this we will not enter the marriage feast. That righteousness that he has given us is pictured as oil in our text and robes in revelation, but oil or robe the point is make sure you have it.

The most important thing you can do for your car is to watch your oil. Check it regularly. Make sure you change it when it needs changing. The wise will similarly regularly check their faith.
Am I a sinner? Did Jesus die for my sins? Do I believe his promise, even the promise that his very body and blood are present here? The one who answers yes to these questions is ready. He is ready for the Lord Supper. He is ready for Jesus to come again.

These Sundays in November are dedicated to looking forward to the coming of Jesus. As we look towards the last day, we began with hymn 200 “I Know that My Redeemer Lives.” We need to begin and end with that confession of faith. Because Jesus lives, we don’t have to fear his coming. Because he lives, we will live also. Because he lives, we are justified, that is forgiven. He lives and because he lives, I shall conquer death.

Amen