Title: “When the Bridegroom is Delayed”

Chris Ryan	**Matt. 25:1–13**	**11/8/2026**

Service Readings: Amos 5:18–24; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Matt. 25:1–13
Faith is tested not just when Christ seems near but also when we have waited for His return.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

> **25** “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the
> bridegroom. **2** Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. **3** For when the foolish took their lamps,
> they took no oil with them, **4** but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. **5** As the bridegroom was
> delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. **6** But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the
> bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ **7** Then all those virgins rose 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, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy
> for yourselves.’ **10** And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were
> ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. **11** Afterward the other virgins
> came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ **12** But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’
> **13** Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup after supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

In that moment, Jesus began to unveil the true depth of God’s love for the world. And on the cross, his love was fully exposed for it was there that he took our place in the courtroom of heaven. The place where we were to stand, he stood for us. And the great judge over all creation laid upon Christ the judgement our sins deserved. And he accepted it because he knew that if it were to fall upon us – and it *should* have – it would mean eternal death. And for all eternity we would never experience his great love. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Oh, the love of God.

High and deep, so broad and wide,
Flows God’s love from Jesus’ side;
Send its fullness from above,
Give unto us Thy saving love.

Deep is God’s great love to me,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Drop the line still more and more!
Deep as the sea, from shore to shore.

But God's love, on display so clearly on the cross, did not end there. For three days later he rose again from the grave, in great proclamation that our death had been defeated. Our sins had been atoned for, paid for, not by us, but by him. And with his resurrection came a great promise. He would one day return, and on that day he would gather us to himself and take us home. And at that time we would finally experience the fullness of his love. "See what kind of love the father has given to us, that we should be called children of God."

But until that day comes, we wait in joyful anticipation. Like the virgins in the parable, we gather to meet our bridegroom. We can't wait for his arrival, for we know the feast that awaits for us. But he is delayed. He doesn't come as quickly as we would like. And so we continue to wait. But what we do while awaiting his return is the lesson of this parable.

Waiting is hard and waiting tests us. Consider a child who eagerly anticipates Christmas. He knows the day is coming, and he can count down the days until it arrives. But imagine being told that Christmas is coming without being told when. The days pass. Then weeks. Eventually, the waiting becomes ordinary, and other things occupy his attention. `We know something similar about waiting for Christ's return. We know he has promised to come again, but we do not know when. Generations have come and gone, and we still wait. It can be tempting to live as though this world, with all it offers, is all there is. But Jesus has not forgotten his promise. The bridegroom is coming.

But this parable is *not* telling us how to make ourselves worthy of the feast. We cannot do that. We do not sustain our faith by our own strength. We cannot make ourselves ready through our efforts. We are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone. So watching and waiting means that we continue to live by the gifts Christ gives us: the faith that the Holy Spirit creates and that is sustained through God's Word and Sacraments. Christ continues to give us what we need as we wait for his return.

Protect your faith. Be watchful; be alert. Don't allow yourself to become distracted by things that bring you immediate joy and worldly fulfillment. Christ has promised that he will return and he gives us the means through which our faith can be sustained as we wait. His body, his blood, his Word. He offers these to us so that our anticipation can continue to be joyful and so that we don't become distracted from this glorious reunion.

And so Jesus' parable calls us to examine ourselves. Not to measure the strength of our faith or to decide whether we have done enough to deserve a place at the feast, but to consider where we are placing our trust. Have we begun to take Christ's promises for granted? Have the things of this world become so important that we no longer make room for his Word? Have we begun to neglect the gifts he gives us?

Perhaps you come to worship this morning feeling distracted. Perhaps your prayers have become routine. Perhaps your faith feels weak, and the thought of Christ's return does not fill you with the joy you wish it did. Hear this: your hope does not rest on the strength of your feelings. It rests on Jesus Christ, who died for you and rose again. And he has not left you to sustain your faith on your own. He continues to come to you through his Word and Sacraments, offering forgiveness, strengthening faith, and directing your eyes toward the promise of his return. Today, his Word calls you to repentance and directs you back to the forgiveness that he has won. If you have grown careless, hear his call. If you have wandered, hear his invitation. If your faith is weak, hear his promises. Christ has not told you to save yourself. He calls you to receive what he freely gives: forgiveness, life, and salvation.

God's love for you is so great that he does not leave you to wait alone. He gives you his Word. He gives you the forgiveness of sins in the body and blood of his son. Through these gifts, the Holy Spirit sustains your faith and points you to the promise that Christ will come again.

So do not look to your own works to determine if you are worthy of the feast. Look to Christ. Do not measure the strength of your faith by how joyfully you feel today. Hear his Word. Receive his gifts. And when you recognize your sin, return to the forgiveness he gives.

We do not know the day or the hour. We do not know how long the waiting will last. But we know the bridegroom. He is the one who loved us and gave himself for us. He is the one who conquered death. And he is the one who has promised to come again. The bridegroom is coming and our hope is in him.

Please pray with me.

O, the height of God's great love,
Higher than the sky above,
Higher than the stars that shine,
Shine in my soul O love divine.