

Matthew 25:1-13 24th Sunday after Pentecost Nov.18, 1990

*Amos 5:18-24* 18Alas for you who desire the day of the Lord! Why do you want the day of the Lord? It is darkness, not light; 19as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. 20Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? 21I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. 23Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. 24But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

*Matthew 25:1-13* “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ 12But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ 13Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

“It’s not fair,” she shouted. “You were the one who was late. Why should I be shut out because of that? You are not fair. Those other maidens could have shared with me - given me enough oil to get by. But they were selfish, and I was shut out. After all those years of going to church, teaching in the Sunday school, fixing and repairing and helping out around the church Lord, how could you say you do not know me? After all that time waiting beside the road, how could I be the one left outside? You have no right to do this to me,” she shouted to a God who was no longer listening - no longer listening, forever.

“Come and rescue us now Lord,” they shouted. “The cities have erupted with violence. Everything is chaos. The poor are roving in mobs, devouring every bit of food. There is no gas for the cars, no electricity to run the furnaces, no food in the stores, no clothing. Lord, come and rescue us. Let now be the day of your coming.”

“And the Lord answered, ‘Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light; as if a man fled from a lion and a bear

met him; or went into the house and leaned with his hand against the wall and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?"

"I hate your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Have we run out of oil? As we await the day of the Lord does our light grow dim? O, we sing our hymns and say to one another, "The Lord is pleased with us." But is he? If I were the Lord, I know that I wouldn't be pleased with Lynn Schlessman. Or Christ Lutheran. Or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. So little love. So much selfishness. So little sacrifice. So much self-interest. So little faith. So much fear and worry.

"What a friend we have in Jesus," we sing. But seldom pray. "In Christ there is no east or west," we sing. Yet we distrust every black man we see. "We give thee but thine own," we sing, but in our hearts begrudge God every cent. Is the Lord pleased with me? No. He's not pleased with me. He's not pleased with you.

That scares me. We are not better now, than people were in Noah's day. There is no more justice in our land now than when the prophet Amos spoke those awful words of the Lord: "I hate, I despise your feasts." Could the Lord be saying anything else this coming week as we will stuff ourselves, barely pausing to mumble thanks to him on a day we call Thanksgiving. The Lord created every person on this earth. He created those Arabs that my heart would love to see taught a terrible lesson. He created those crack babies that I would like to keep out of sight and out of mind. He chose to give us the awesome responsibility of wealth and health and talents beyond the health and wealth and talents of most all the people on this earth and more and more we would be content to roll up into a fetal position and wait out our time. "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven," he calls to us. But the oil is running out. And selfishness and fear make it run out all the more quickly.

God is not pleased with us. There is no reason why God should be. When the door is shut, and God says, "I do not know you," we can cry that we did not understand and that he is not fair, and it will just be too late.

“Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord,” said Amos. You always thought it would be your deliverance. It will be your damnation.

Were it not for Jesus Christ this sermon would be over. God is not pleased with us, with his world. God is every bit as angry as when God washed it all away in the flood. We wonder why God doesn't treat us better? If we saw things as they really are we would marvel that God does not treat us far worse. Were it not for Jesus Christ there would be nothing more to say.

But Jesus Christ was born for you - lived on this earth for you - took all the flood of God's judgement for you and kept trusting in God (in a way that we have not even begun to trust) even through death for you and was raised out of the waters of death for you.

God is not pleased with us. But in Christ God has vowed to eternally love us. If you are not surprised by that then you have not begun to understand God, or yourself. In Christ God has chosen to love you. You, the very child in God's family who has given God so many headaches, and been so ungrateful, and wasted so many of the advantages Jesus sacrificed to provide for you. Jesus has chosen to love you. And though you give him nothing but heartache from this day on, he will stick with his decision to love you.

He will listen to our hymns, and hope that what we sing is what we live. He will give us countless opportunities to love our neighbor as ourselves and hope love will light our hearts and guide our hands. God will bless us with blessings beyond any deserving and hope that our hearts will sing with gratitude.

We have no reason to think that on the day of the Lord we deserve anything but darkness and rejection. But we trust that the light who is Christ will overcome every darkness.