



Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I come to you again in prayer. Even though I cannot see you, I know through faith that you are present in my life. I hope in your promise to be with me. I love you, and I know you love me. Accept this prayer as a token of my love.

Petition: Lord, make me long for and strive to enter the kingdom of heaven.

1. A Severe Oil Shortage: The Gospel invites us to have oil for our lamps, that is, to be always ready for the coming of the Lord. He appears in moments and ways we do not expect and at all times throughout our day. The foolish virgins failed to anticipate when and how the Lord would come to them, and they were not prepared. So often we, too, get caught up in a thousand affairs and worries, and we can miss what is essential. We miss the presence of Christ in the people around us, in the circumstances in which we

are living. Sometimes, Christ comes to us through some sacrifice or suffering; but we do not recognize him in it, and we reject it. We need to strengthen our faith and see how the Lord may appear in our lives.

2. The Door Closes: Over and over in the New Testament, Jesus makes clear that there is a real possibility some people, due to their own choices, may not be saved. The most terrible thing that could happen to any person would be to hear those words from the Lord who created us and died to save us: "I do not know you." The Lord takes our freedom to choose very seriously. He never forces our will. He never imposes himself on us. Rather he invites us to make a free response of love and obedience to him and the way of life he taught us. We must choose to remain steadfast in the way of the Christian life. God cannot save us without our cooperation.

3. Stay Awake: Saint Augustine said, "Beware of the grace of God that passes and does not return." We need to perceive God's presence in the little things of each day and never let the opportunity to love and serve him pass us by. Our faith must be ready and watching for him. If we take him for granted, or presume that we are already saved, we can miss our chance to be with him.

Conversation with Christ: Jesus, thank you for teaching us so clearly about the seriousness of our choices. How terrible it would be to opt for death instead of eternal life with you! I want to choose you and your ways, but I am weak. Make me watch and wait always, ready to see you in all things and do your will.

Resolution: I will actively look for signs of Christ in others today.