

“The Fatal Procrastination”—Matthew 25:6-13

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Fatal Procrastination”, is Matthew 25:6-13 → *At midnight there was a cry, “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” 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.” 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. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, “Lord, lord, open to us.” But he answered, “Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.” Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Procrastination is the art of intentionally or habitually putting off doing something that should be done. I call it an “art” because we can be pretty creative in our procrastination, especially if it’s something we really don’t enjoy doing or don’t want to do. From the child who has been told the umpteenth time to clean his room . . . to the employee who leaves a task until the last minute . . . to the board member who starts to do his

assigned tasks the night before the next board meeting . . .
procrastination seems to be a “national pastime.”

While some people may work good under pressure sometimes procrastination can be dangerous—even fatal. Putting off repairs and regular maintenance with some things could cause malfunction and injury. Putting off responding to physical signs of sickness could lead to more complex physical struggles or even death. Thus, the cliché, “do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today” is actually very applicable. We get the impression that Jesus would agree, in particular when it comes to your salvation. Spiritual procrastination is the **fatal** procrastination.

Jesus told a story about ten virgins. We would refer to them as bridesmaids, women who attend to the needs of a bride as they accompany her throughout her wedding. Jesus told this story to stress the importance of being prepared to meet Him properly because He will come back on the Last Day at any moment. It is a parable warning against the eternally fatal procrastination.

Apparently the parable is based upon common wedding customs of His day and thus may seem a little strange to many of us. Preparations for a wedding in our culture seem to resemble more of a production with the fancy decorations, formal attire, hair and makeup, pictures, the reception, dance and other customs which are intended to produce the

“perfect” wedding ceremony and celebration. Interestingly, in the effort to plan and implement the “perfect” wedding the “imperfections” of sinners working together become very evident and everything does not work out “perfectly.”

One focus of the preparations for the wedding in Jesus’ day was bringing the bride to the bridegroom, primarily the responsibility of the bridesmaids. The bridesmaids prepared the bride to meet her groom and then presented her to him when he came to meet her at the wedding ceremony. However, Jesus seems to suggest in the parable that in the midst of all the planning and preparation the bridesmaids may not have known exactly what time the groom would initiate the ceremony. Don’t you think setting a date and time would be a priority after announcing an engagement? Otherwise, how would the guests know when to be there? Did they too have to watch and be ready for the bridegroom’s appearance as well?

Whatever the details of Jesus’ story, they reinforce the point of the parable expressed in verse 13 of our text: *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. The day and the hour* to which Jesus was referring is Judgment Day when He comes back and all mankind will receive their eternal home. Since we *know neither the day nor the hour* when this will happen we must be prepared by watching for Him in faith.

The challenge presented by the parable is that the groom was

delayed and the bridesmaids had to wait longer, becoming drowsy and falling asleep (cf. Matthew 25:5). Waiting is a challenge for many people including Christian waiting for Jesus to come again. The real challenge, however, is the choices you make during this waiting period as you strive to remain faithful to Jesus to the end. Temptations to unfaithfulness lurk around every corner as you live in a sinful world amidst the constant temptations to sin and unfaithfulness.

For instance, we live amongst unbelievers who act like the foolish bridesmaids of Jesus' parable in verses 6-12 of our text. When the bridegroom came to meet his bride all the bridesmaids *rose and trimmed their lamps*. Since the foolish ones had not brought enough oil to carry their watch through the night (cf. Matthew 25:3) they *said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out."* The wise refused to help them. So, *while the foolish virgins were going to buy some more oil in town, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the foolish virgins came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." But he answered, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you."* This is not just a case of "you snooze, you lose." It is much more serious. Once Jesus returns there is no second chance.

It is a picture of many who refuse to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus' atoning work for their forgiveness **now**, thinking that they'll deal

with it when they're old and/or nearing death. It is a deception which produces the fatal procrastination because the day of your death may come suddenly or Jesus *will come on a day when you do not expect him and at an hour you do not know* (cf. Matthew 24:50), leaving you left out of the eternal *marriage feast* in Christ's presence. It is the fatal procrastination because it leaves one with eternal suffering in hell. 2 Peter 3:3-4 says such unbelief is also evidenced by *scoffers* who *will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."* Such unbelief and spiritual procrastination will have serious eternal consequences.

It is also a picture of people living under a false security, thinking that they will be ready by simply being on the membership books of a congregation but not needing to take an intentional part in receiving the means of grace dispensed and received in the worship services of that congregation. This too is fatal because it fails to recognize what Christ did to prepare you for the "marriage" on the Last Day by His life, death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life.

Throughout Scripture our relationship with Jesus as His Church is described in terms of a marriage relationship, bride and groom, husband and wife. It is based upon the LORD's covenant of love with us

sinner expressed in His faithfulness in Jesus. Comparing the relationship between husband and wife with Christ and His Bride, Ephesians 5:25-27 says that *Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* Jesus has cleansed you, His bride, of all your sins by giving His life for you, gaining your victory over the power of sin, death and devil through His death and resurrection! You have been connected to this act of grace in your baptism—*the washing of water with the word!* Why did He do this for you, His bride, the Church? Because of His steadfast love for you, He wants you prepared to be presented holy and blameless in His sight on the Last Day!

Until this Day comes, He **now** provides His means of grace in the written and proclaimed Word, in the Lord's Supper and in Confession & Absolution which His bride, the Church, dispenses and receives regularly in worship to remain prepared by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit for godly living each day. This why you do not simply belong to a church but you are the church, taking part in the preparations for the Wedding Feast in the presence of your Groom, Jesus, eternally as you take part of His means of grace by faith in Him **now!**

Thus, refusing to partake of these means according to Christ's

command **now** can constitute a fatal procrastination, surprised on the Last Day at being left out of the eternal *marriage feast* with Jesus. Instead, we desire to be serious participants in God's community, participating in all the gifts that God has given by His grace and sharing them with others. Jesus gave His life to prepare you for eternal life as a gift of grace! It is for this reason that Paul spoke the words of 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 to the **Christians** who made up the church in Corinth → *Working together with God, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, **now** is the favorable time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation. Amen.*

We look forward to being united with Jesus on the Last Day

as described in Revelation 19:7 when we will

"rejoice and exult and give Him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and His Bride has made herself ready.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.