

Alleluia, alleluia! / Be watchful and ready: / you know not when the Son of Man is coming. / Alleluia!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Look, the bridegroom comes. Go out to meet him.

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: ‘The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him.’ At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, ‘Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out.’ But they replied, ‘There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves.’ They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said ‘open the door for us.’ But he replied, ‘I tell you solemnly, I do not know you.’ So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

12 NOVEMBER 2023

BEING ON THE ALERT

Some thirty years of Christian life and experience separate the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians and the writing of Matthew’s Gospel. When Paul wrote in the late Forties and early Fifties there was a keen sense and expectation that the Lord was going to return at any moment. These earliest Christians were so convinced that this was the case that they were unprepared and ill-equipped to deal with the death of other Christians before the Lord’s return. It is not as though Paul himself had foreseen this difficulty and, as is often the case in his letters, we see how a concrete problem prompts him to further reflection. It is important not to press Paul’s description of the return of the Lord too far. This is theology in the making and Paul himself will continue to develop his thought on these matters (see 1 Corinthians 15).

If Paul’s Christians faced the problem caused by assuming the Lord would return soon, Matthew’s community had to confront another set of circumstances. The fact that by the early to mid-Eighties the Lord had not returned placed another dilemma before them. For Matthew, the problem was that of a community becoming apathetic and seeing its initial enthusiasm and commitment wane. The parable of Jesus about the bridesmaids who fell asleep and missed their opportunity was the perfect means to stress the need for Christians to be prepared as they waited for the Lord’s return.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Wis 6: 12-16

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

Wisdom is found by those who look for it.

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim. By those who love her she is readily seen, and found by those who look for her.

Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she makes herself known to them.

Watch for her early and you will have no trouble; you will find her sitting at your gates.

Even to think about her is understanding fully grown;

be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly leave you.

She herself walks about looking for those who are worthy of her

and graciously shows herself to them as they go. in every thought of theirs coming to meet them.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 62: 2-8. R. v. 2

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

- O God, you are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water. **R.**
- So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory. For your love is better than life, my lips will speak your praise. **R.**
- So I will bless you all my life, in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul shall be filled as with a banquet, my mouth shall praise you with joy. **R.**
- On my bed I remember you. On you I muse through the night for you have been my help; in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Thess 4: 13-18

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

Those who died as Christians, God will bring to life with Jesus.

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him.

We can tell you this from the Lord’s own teaching, that any of us who are left alive until the Lord’s coming will not have any advantage over those who have died. At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for ever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another.

■ The word of the Lord.

Shorter form, 1 Thess 4: 13-14