

**End Time Attribute: Readiness** Matthew 25:1-13  
Pent23A 11-12-17

For all 12 of her school years in Fairfield, our daughter Mary was a close friend of Christy. Christy joined our church in junior high the day she was confirmed with Mary and others. Within a couple of weeks of our move here Christy died in a car accident. Was she ready?

Readiness is required as an end time attribute, for not only do we not know the day of Christ's arrival, we also, like Christy, do not know the day of death. Our family also was in car accident, but while the car was totaled, we were spared. How many veterans remember nearly dying in a battle that their brother in arms did not survive? How easily it could have been their day to die. How many congregants at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs were ready to die a week ago?

The Bible tells Christians to be ready to do good to all, ready to testify to the reason for our hope, and ready for the day of our departure from this life. If we are not ready, we will be left permanently outside the door of the wedding banquet hall known as heaven.

Readiness is required today, because whether we leave this life due to death or to Christ's return, the day of repentance will have passed. It is too late to figure it out, just as the five foolish unmarried women did not have time to get more oil. Holy Scripture declares that it is appointed once for us to die, and after that comes the judgment. Death decides our destiny forever.

Christ warns us in the parable of the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom to take his bride home. The number ten means that this applies to all the church, pictured in Scripture as the Bride of Christ. The Bridegroom is the same Christ whom Revelation calls the "holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens." What He shuts stays shut for good.

The oil is whatever is required to be ready for the coming of Christ. Its lack is symbolic of not being ready. Those five without the oil were not otherwise good people who just made a mistake. Jesus says they were foolish already, and that is why they lacked oil. They did not live in daily readiness. By contrast, the other five showed their wisdom by being ready with a sufficient supply of oil. Their sleep showed that all thought they were ready.

Readiness is not something you want to be wrong about. We need to know if we have the oil we

need. What is this oil? In Matthew 7 Jesus refers to the wise who built their house on a rock and the foolish who built it on sand. The wise would enter heaven on the last Day, and the foolish would not. The difference Jesus said was that wise hear and do His words, and the foolish merely hear them, but do not do them.

In the outward visible church, there are those who hear but do not do God's will. Paul wrote of them in 2 Timothy as those who have the appearance of godliness but deny it's power. Thus, do not submit to it, but rather cloak themselves in religion to hide a sinful heart.

At times, we are all foolish, deceiving ourselves with false readiness. We like to hold the shiny lamp, but sometimes there is no light coming from it. We have faith without works.

When we realize this from God's Law, we should be alarmed. but we should not focus on what works we must do. Rather, we repent of our sin and acknowledge that we are as helpless to save ourselves as were the five foolish women who didn't have time to get the oil they needed.

The end time attribute of readiness, the oil, is faith that in Christ and Him alone, all things have been made ready for us. He has born our sins on the cross. To do His word is to believe and receive what He offers in His Word. Forgiveness of sins. To be and stay ready before the door is shut, hear him knocking on the door of your heart. By His Spirit welcome Him in, for He desires to cleanse you from sin, transform your heart and strengthen your faith through the hearing of His word and the reception of his Sacrament.

As for Christy, by the time she had graduated from high school, she had not been active in church as she was before. Preaching her funeral, I could not point to her works as a model of Christian conduct that showed her saving faith. However, I could assure her family and friends of the faith she confessed publicly in worship through the Apostle's Creed. For only by such a confession of what Christ has done for her, not in what she had done for Him, Christy was ready. Let this same faith make us ready to do good to all, ready to testify to our certain hope in Christ, and ready to die. Amen.