

32 SUNDAY OF YEAR A

ONLY GOOD WORKS WILL GET US TO HEAVEN

Mt. 25:1-13

Jesus wants everyone to get to Heaven. So He told a parable of what we must do if we want to be there ourselves. It was about ten bridesmaids who were invited to a wedding which was held at night. It was their task to accompany the bridegroom to the house of the bride and take her to the wedding. The bridegroom was late and the oil in their lamps was running out. The wise one brought surplus oil, but the foolish ones hadn't. The latter asked for some of their oil but they were refused. So they had to go and buy oil for themselves. When they returned it was too late for the doors of the marriage feast was closed.

Some reading this passage think the wise bridesmaids were selfish but this misses the point Jesus is trying to make - that this oil is not something that can be borrowed. Jesus is indicating that at certain moments in life, in times of crisis, we are on our own and no one can help us. For example at a certain moment we may long to borrow some strength of another person, but it is impossible. In such an hour we will have to cope with whatever we have. So it was with these five foolish maidens. When the foolish maidens arrived saying, "Lord, Lord, open the door to us." He replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you." Jesus concludes, "So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour."

How disappointed the five foolish bridesmaids were! But with these revealing words from the Lord we can now discover what the oil signifies. The oil is a symbol of repentance and good works. It is this that keeps the lamp of our faith commitment burning brightly. The oil that runs out, causing that spark of faith within us to grow dim, points to our neglect of good works during our lifetime; works which we should have performed and did not.

The wise, however, have an extra reservoir of oil which continually feeds the flame of life, never letting it be extinguished in darkness, helping them through every hour of stress, of

32 SUNDAY OF YEAR A

pressure or disaster, keeping them firm and steady in the midst of the buffeting pressures of life.

If we have not led good lives it will do no good at the end of our lives to ask for oil from another person. That cannot be done. We cannot take the good works of others to help us to get to Heaven. We must perform those works ourselves. Others' good works are marked 'Non-transferable' and cannot be shared.

Lord Jesus, with Your help may we lead lives full of good works, keeping our lamps burning brightly, so that when You call us we will be ready and admitted to the wedding feast of Heaven.