

Sunday, December 2nd, 2012

The Rev. Dr. Hetz Marsh Jr. '68, Retired Presbyterian Minister and Pastoral Counselor.
Distinguished Alum '00

Scripture:

Matthew 25:1-13

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Devotional:

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins was used by Jesus to respond to a question about the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth, and the final victory on earth of God's Son.

In this parable and in many other teachings, Jesus tips God's hand. He tells us how the end will be. He doesn't tell us when he will return, or how he will achieve his final triumph, but he leaves no doubt that it will happen.

Usually when someone writes a novel he or she does not let the readers know how it ends. The end of the salvation story is sure and under God's complete control. God does not leave us in suspense. God wants us to know.

We don't know how, we don't know when, but God wants us to know that someday God will be victorious. We need not worry about the outcome. Our human drama will not end with a dark cloud and stench of defeat. It will end in light and glory.

Bertolt Brecht wrote, "A ship will sink – that's what we must resign ourselves to."

Pascal had another view. He said, "life is like a voyage on a ship which may be tossed by storms and waves, but a ship which we know will reach its harbor safe and warm."

Jesus reveals a view of life that confirms Pascal. Storms and waves are allowed in our lives but God will work the final victory, of that we can be certain.

Someday there will be a shout and the bridegroom will arrive. And then we will see how humankind is finally led not a funeral but to a wedding.

Have an alert, expectant Advent.

Prayer:

Holy and loving God. Thank you for the Advent Hope in Christ. Awaken us this Blessed Season. Amen.