The Last Sunday of the Church Year

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11). The arrival of the bridegroom will be sudden and unexpected. Therefore you are to be watchful and ready like the five wise virgins. *"For you know neither the day nor the hour"* when the Son of Man is to return. (Matthew 25:1–13). The lamps are the Word of Christ. The oil in the lamps is the Holy Spirit, who works through the Word to create and sustain the flame of faith in Christ. The foolish are those who do not give proper attention to the working of the Holy Spirit in baptism, preaching, and the supper, and so their faith does not endure. The wise, however, are those who diligently attend to these gifts of the Spirit, and who therefore have an abundance of oil. The flame of faith endures to the end. By God's grace they are received into the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, the new heavens and the new earth created by the Lord for the joy of His people (Isaiah 65:17–25).

Introit: (Psalm 39:4-5, 7-8; antiphon: Isaiah 35:10)

Pastor: The ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

Congregation: They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

P: O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!

C: Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!

P: And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

C: Deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the scorn of the fool!

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Collect of the Day

Lord God, heavenly Father, send forth Your Son, we pray, to lead home His bride, the Church, that with all the company of the redeemed we may finally enter into His eternal wedding feast; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

+ Isaiah 65:17-25 +

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. (19) I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. (20) No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. (21) They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. (23) They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. (24) Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. (25) The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Gradual: (Psalm 45:14-15)

In many-colored robes [the king's daughter] is led | to the king, *
with her virgin companions following be- | hind her.
With joy and gladness they are | led along *
as they enter the palace | of the king.

+ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 +

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. (2) For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (3) While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (4) But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. (5) For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. (6) So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. (7) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. (8) But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. (9) For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. (11) Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

The Lutheran Confessions Responsive Reading: The Augsburg Confession (1530)

P: What do we believe, teach, and confess of "Justification" (Article IV)?

C: Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4 [3:21–26; 4:5]).

P: What do we believe, teach, and confess of "The Ministry" (Article V)?.

C: So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22]. He works faith, when and where it pleases God [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ's sake.

P: Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that through their own preparations and works the Holy Spirit comes to them without the external Word.

Verse: (Revelation 21:2)

P: Alleluia. I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

C: prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Alleluia.

+ Matthew 25:1-13 +

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. (2) Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. (3) For 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, they all became drowsy and slept. (6) But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' (7) Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. (8) And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' (9) 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.' (10) 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. (11) Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' (12) But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' (13) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.