

## Sermon followed by Service

November 12, 2023

Matthew 25:1-13

Think with me: What are the scariest verses in the Bible?

- How about: “Greet one another with a holy kiss”?
- A scary verse for teachers, especially Bible teachers: “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”
- One for pastors: “I will tell them [false pastors] plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”
- Here is one that got me scolded when I preached on it a few years ago: Ananias and Sapphira. This is a paraphrase: They lie to God, and they die by God.
- I think one of the scariest verses in the Bible has to be in our lesson today. You heard it a few minutes ago. Jesus says: “I don’t know you.”

“I don’t know you.” What do you do with that? That’s what I wanted to know, so I googled some sermons. The first couple sermons, here’s what they did with it: \_\_\_\_\_. That’s right, nothing. Just as if Jesus never said it. Worse, with those sermons, it was almost as if Jesus never existed. But that makes sense, doesn’t it? When we pretend there is no judgment, who needs a Savior? When we pretend there is no judgment, who needs a Jesus?

But before I get all puffed up for dropping a line on you that some preachers are afraid to say, here’s something scary - How often have I lived, how often do I still live like Jesus never said

it? - “I don’t know you.” How often do we get caught up living the life of the world, putting Jesus off to the side, ignoring Jesus, living the life of the world like Jesus would never say to us: “I don’t know you”? How often do we stick our heads in the sand and pretend Jesus never said it, or would never say: “I don’t know you” to family or friend, to neighbor or co-worker? Scary, isn’t it?

Did you notice this about those shut out by Jesus? In the parable, they don’t present themselves as enemies of the groom; they present themselves as friends. In the parable, they weren’t outsiders; they were part of the “in” crowd. They know who the groom is; they know who Jesus is. But they couldn’t be bothered to be ready for Jesus; they couldn’t be bothered to make sure they stayed ready for Jesus.

That’s scary. The thought of Jesus, that Jesus in our window, looking us in the eye, looking anybody in the eye: “I don’t know you.” Oh, it stops us up short, sends a shiver up and down our spines, drops a dark cloud over our heads and hearts, doesn’t it? Or at least I hope so. Why? I think of David in Psalm 51: “**A broken and contrite heart, o God, you will not despise.**” I think of God speaking to Jonah about wicked, cruel, violent Nineveh. Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed. Do you remember what God wanted? Grace and mercy: “**Should I not be concerned?**” Should we not be sad? The thought of Jesus shutting the door on anybody is sad.

“I don’t know you.” If those words aren’t some of the scariest words in the Bible, they are certainly some of the saddest. Not just because of the judgment in those words. Not just because of

the hell on the other side of those words. But “I don’t know you” has to be some of the saddest words in the Bible because Jesus wants so much to say: “Welcome home!” Jesus doesn’t find joy in shutting the door. He wants so much to invite: **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”**

When Jesus says: “all you,” when he invites, “all you,” he doesn’t just have all you [in this 10 degree arc] in mind. This is the “all you” Jesus opens his heart for: **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** This is the “all you” Jesus opens his heart for: **“Go and make disciples of all nations.”**

For Jesus, those aren’t just words. For Jesus, an open heart isn’t just a warm, fuzzy heart sitting in a comfy chair wishing things were different.

No, remember how Jesus opened his arms to bless the children, how he reached out and touched that man with leprosy, how he ate with the sinners, how he forgave the guilty, how he gave hope to the hopeless? Do you see yourself in there? Jesus made a point of inviting those hushed and shushed by others. He made a point of including those put off and pushed off by others. He made a point of inviting and including and offering an open door to those who had shut themselves out by what they had done. Jesus opened his heart and made a point of sharing the peace and the promise of God with those who had no peace or promise.

Not just in words. On the cross, Jesus stretched out his arms and gave his life as the lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. As the Good Shepherd, he gave his life for sheep that were lost and sheep that would stray, for sheep that were already in with him, and for sheep that were still out and on the wrong side. Jesus gave his everything to open the door for everyone and anyone and for you.

For you. Seeing you, not as a stranger, but knowing you as family kept Jesus going to the cross even when so many were shutting their hearts to him. Seeing you with him in heaven kept Jesus going even when God the Father was shutting his heart to him. Seeing you with him, knowing you as his in heaven, kept Jesus going all the way to the cross. Why? So that God can see you and know you with your sins paid for and gone. So that with Jesus, God can see you and call you forgiven. So that with Jesus, God can see you and know you as his people, holy and right by him. Right for life with him in heaven.

Life in heaven. That's the wedding feast in Jesus' parable. A forever celebration. A life where we will never be sad - there will be no death or mourning or crying or pain. A life where we will never be scared of God or anything. A life where we will never feel shut out from God or anyone. A life where we will never do wrong or be wrong; a life where we will never drop the ball or miss out on what God has for us. Instead, we will enjoy life the way it's supposed to be. That's what Jesus has for us, for you, for me, for them.

I don't want to miss out on that. I don't want to hear Jesus say: "I don't know you." I don't want any of you or them to miss out on that. I don't want any of you or them to hear Jesus say: "I don't know you." And neither does Jesus! So what does Jesus say? **"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."** "Keep watch. Be ready."

How? You've heard me say "I don't know you" more times than you ever want to hear. Let me share with you his **"I know you"** promise: **"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. ... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."** "I know you." That's the promise Jesus has for you. Amen.

November 11 & 12, 2023

## DIVINE SERVICE II

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** so often we wait and wait only to be ignored and treated like we don't exist.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we are encouraged to wake up, to wait and be ready for Jesus to come for us ... and when he does, he won't ignore those who are ready and waiting!

### OPENING HYMN

*"Jerusalem the Golden"*

Hymn 890

Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest—  
the sight of it refreshes the weary and oppressed.  
I know not, oh, I know not what joys await us there,  
what radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion, all jubilant with song  
and bright with many an angel and all the martyr throng.  
The Prince is ever in them, the daylight is serene;  
the pastures of the blessed are ever rich and green.

There is the throne of David, and there, from care released,  
the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast.  
And they who with their leader have conquered in the fight  
forever and forever are clad in robes of white.

O sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect!  
In mercy, Jesus, bring us to that dear land of rest;  
you are with God the Father and Spirit ever blest.

## INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

## CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.  
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,  
For sins of habit and sins of choice,  
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,  
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.  
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**

## ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

## LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God and Savior, you have set the final day and hour when we shall be delivered from this world of sin and death. Keep us ever watchful for the coming of your Son that we may sit with him and all your holy ones at the marriage feast in heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## FIRST READING

*1 Thessalonians 5:1–11*

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 90A

Refrain



Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!



Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!



Lord, you have been our / dwelling place  
throughout all gener- / ations.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the / whole world,  
from everlasting to everlasting / you are God.

You turn people / back to dust,  
saying, "Return to dust, you / mortals."

A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has / just gone by,  
or like a watch / in the night. *Refrain*

Teach us to number / our days,  
that we may gain a heart of / wisdom.

May the favor of the Lord our God / rest on us;  
establish the work of our hands for us—  
yes, establish the work / of our hands.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son  
and to the Holy / Spirit,**

**as it was in the be- / ginning,  
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Alleluia.

## GOSPEL

*Matthew 25:1–13*

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.

The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

“Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

“‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

## APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## HYMN OF THE DAY

*"Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying"*

Hymn 486

*"Wake, awake, for night is flying,"  
the watchmen on the heights are crying; "awake, Jerusalem, arise!"  
Midnight hears the welcome voices and at the thrilling cry rejoices:  
"Oh, where are all you virgins wise? The Bridegroom comes, awake!  
Your lamps with gladness take! Alleluia!  
With bridal care yourselves prepare to meet the Bridegroom, who is near."*

Zion hears the watchmen singing,  
and all her heart with joy is springing; she wakes, she rises from her gloom.  
For her Lord comes down all-glorious,  
the strong in grace, in truth victorious; her star is ris'n, her light is come.  
Now come, O Blessèd One, Christ Jesus, God's own Son. Hail! Hosanna!  
We enter all the marriage hall to eat the Supper at your call.

Now let all the heav'ns adore you,  
let saints and angels sing before you with harp and cymbal's clearest tone.  
Of one pearl each shining portal, where, dwelling with the choir immortal,  
we gather round your radiant throne.  
No vision ever brought, no ear has ever caught such great glory;  
therefore will we in victory sing hymns of praise eternally.

## SERMON

## HYMN

*"What Joy to Join the Chorus"*

Hymn 882 vs. 1, 2, 4

What joy to join the chorus, to look in Jesus' eyes,  
whose blood and suff'ring for us have opened paradise,  
where patriarchs are singing and prophets raise the cry,  
apostles, martyrs bringing all praise to God Most High!

What love will then be shown us when we with them appear!  
They will not blush to own us as brothers, sisters dear.  
We all shall come before him who for us man became,  
as Lord and God adore him, and ever bless his name.

There God shall from all evil forever make us free,  
from sin and from the devil, from all adversity,  
from sickness, pain, and sadness, from troubles, cares, and fears,  
and grant us heav'nly gladness and wipe away our tears.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear our voices.

C: **Let your ears be attentive to our cries for mercy.**

M: Heavenly Father, we confess with sorrow that we have sinned and deserve only your anger and punishment.

C: **If you kept a record of our sins, we would surely be lost.**

M: We confess with joy that your unfailing love has redeemed us.

C: **Our hope is in you and in your full redemption.**

M: Around us we see the birth pangs of the last days: war, famine, earthquakes, false prophets, spiritual apathy.

C: **Use these signs to remind us that we do not know the day or hour when Christ will come again.**

M: Keep us faithful to your Word; send your Spirit to strengthen our faith so that we are always prepared for your Son's return as judge.

C: **Make us faithful in sharing your Word, and cause many more to put their hope in you before the end comes.**

M: Build our fellowship of love as brothers and sisters in faith.

C: **Help us support one another when trials and troubles come our way.**

*Special prayers and intercessions may follow.*

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

*Silent prayer.*

M: Heavenly Father, we eagerly wait for Jesus to come again and make all things new. May he find us, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, faithfully enduring to the end, through the power of your Holy Spirit.

C: **Come, Lord Jesus. May your grace be with us. Amen.**

#### PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN

*"There Is a Higher Throne"*

Hymn 885

There is a higher throne than all this world has known,  
where faithful ones from ev'ry tongue will one day come.  
Before the Son we'll stand, made faultless through the Lamb;  
believing hearts find promised grace; salvation comes.

### *Refrain*

Hear heaven's voices sing; their thund'rous anthem rings  
through em'rald courts and sapphire skies; their praises rise.  
All glory, wisdom, pow'r, strength, thanks, and honor are  
to God our King who reigns on high forevermore.

And there we'll find our home, our life before the throne;  
we'll honor him in perfect song where we belong.  
He'll wipe each tear-stained eye as thirst and hunger die;  
the Lamb becomes our Shepherd-King; we'll reign with him. *Refrain*

## OFFERING

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## **Alert! Alert! Alert!**

'Tis the season, the cold and flu season. We love our Lord! We love to gather with God's people to worship him! We don't look for excuses to miss church - getting together with God and his people is important to us, just like our getting together for worship is important to God!

And yet, 'Tis the season, the cold and flu season. So we come prepared with cough drops. We teach our children how to cough and sneeze. We wash our hands; perhaps we use the hand sanitizer on the greeter counters or in the Fellowship Hall. If we're on the edge of getting something or giving something, we might use the face masks at the greeter tables.

And sometimes, even though we love to get together and worship, sometimes it can be good to stay home. When we're sick - carrying, coughing, sneezing, and passing germs around - it may be the good loving thing to love God and his people by keeping our germs to ourselves. Then Sunday morning, afternoon, or evening, with your chicken soup, you can join us in worship online at [StJohnsLib.com](http://StJohnsLib.com). Thank you! And may God bless us with health!

## **St. John Kitchen Dedication**

Sunday, November 19

The long awaited day is coming! Our Kitchen Renovation project is coming to completion. In celebration of this blessing, we will be having an early THANKSGIVING celebration day, a special day to give thanks not just for our new kitchen, but also to recognize the many other blessings we have in our St John ministry! (We will also be gathering for our Thanksgiving Eve service at 6:30.)

After church on Sunday, November 19, we will meet in the Fellowship Hall during our normal Family Bible Hour and hear from our fellow ministry partners on the blessings we want to acknowledge we have here at St. John. We will get updates on projects and have the opportunity to ask questions as usual, but we will be focused on communicating the many good things we have going on at St John and thank God for the blessings He continues to provide us.

After we share the stories of thanksgiving we see around our shared ministry, we will feast! We get to have a great celebration meal as we “break in” our fabulous new kitchen. We pray we will have many more opportunities to use our kitchen as we gather together and reach out as “A Family Connecting in Christ.”

**Please join** us for turkey, mashed potatoes, and your surprise sides and desserts.

**Please bring** a side dish or dessert.

**Please RSVP** for our Kitchen Dedication Dinner at

<https://stjohnslib.com/RSVP>, or by calling the office - 847-362-4424

**Please join us for this early THANKSGIVING event!**

And help us celebrate the blessings we have in our St John ministry!