

Guest Meditations:

Question: have we stopped journeying, ceased searching? Are we so content with present arrangements in our lives that we, unlike Augustine, have no expectation of conversion, of meeting, of being swept up in the great purposes of God? Perhaps those five maidens who neglected to acquire oil for their lamps simply stopped imagining that the promised party would ever begin.

William Willimon

The foolish maidens were foolish because they expected everything to be on schedule. No delays. The foolish didn't anticipate a sudden change of plan. They didn't prepare for every possible contingency so as to insure their presence at the feast. They didn't realize that this feast was everything, that to be there called for investment of one's total being and every resource—surplus included. The foolish didn't know the importance of the meal. What now are the expectations of your heart? How do you rank this feast? Are you here for a taste, or are you here to be dazzled by a foretaste? Foolish are you, or are you wise?

John Christian Frederick Heyer, died 1873; Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, died 1719; Ludwig Nommensen, died 1918; missionaries

After teaching at Gettysburg College and Seminary, Heyer was assigned to the Andhra region of India. A worker among the Tamil people on the southeast coast of India, Ziegenbalg was opposed both by local Hindus and by Danish authorities who favored a different missionary style. He was known for caring about the welfare of the whole person. Nommensen was born in northern Germany and was sent to Sumatra as a missionary. Working among the Batak people, he translated the scriptures into their language, and honored their native culture.

Introduction:

Today the prophet Amos calls for justice to roll down like waters. Paul urges us to encourage one another with the promised coming of the Lord. Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. Surrounded by the faithful of every time and place, we celebrate Christ's coming in our midst in the word of life and the feast of victory—the marriage feast of the lamb

First Lesson:

In this speech, Amos takes up one of the central themes of Israel's faith and turns it against his Israelite audience. The Day of the Lord was understood to be a day of disaster and judgment for the Lord's enemies, but one of salvation and deliverance for the Lord's people. Now, Amos declares, because the people have turned away from God and failed to pursue justice and righteousness, Israel will be numbered among the Lord's enemies.

Second Lesson:

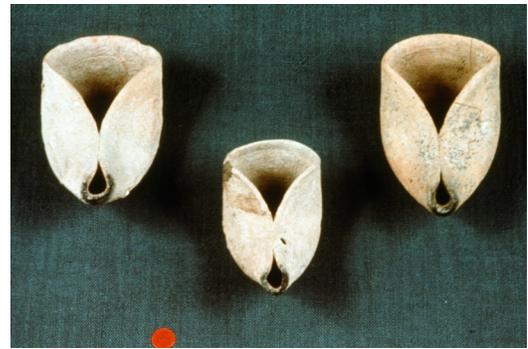
In this chapter, Jesus tells three parables about the second coming. The first of these emphasizes the need for readiness at all times.

Expecting a delay, we are all tempted to look here, there and everywhere for a taste of something, of something—how should we say—divine. Foolish ones, we seek here a morsel which will supply relief from the complexities of schedule and vocation.

A taste among many. But the wise were wise because they brought a flask of extra oil.

Large quantities of oil in single flasks. It didn't matter that there might be other feasts, other seeming purposes to life. These had no value. There was nothing else for which to save the oil. This feast was everything. This bridegroom was worth feasting with. To be wise today is to receive the power of the signs.

Mark P. Bangert



Food
for
Thought