

Today's gospel falls within a section of Luke wherein Jesus gives many warnings and exhortations (12:1 - 13:9). Yesterday's warning was storing up treasure for oneself rather than what matters toward God. Today we have the warning about vigilance – being ready. We will hear Matthew's version of this the second Sunday in November with the ten virgins. Let's look more closely at these verses.

The disciples are told to gird their loins and light their lamps. The idea of girding your loins reminds us of the exodus, where the Israelites were to eat the Passover meal with a belt on their waist, shoes on their feet, and staff in hand (Ex. 12:11). They were to be prepared for a quick departure. The same should be true for the disciples. They should be ready to depart from this life to the next at any time.

Regarding the lamps, it is helpful to know that an important part of a Jewish wedding ceremony was the procession from the home of the bride's parents to the couple's new home. The bridegroom escorted his wife and their pathway was lit by lamps or flaming torches. In Matthew's Gospel, the wise virgins had an ample amount of oil, while the foolish did not.

Jesus then gives an unexpected twist to the parable. We expect the servants to seat the master and wait on him. However, Jesus has flipped the roles. The master serves the servants. It reminds us of Jesus' mission wherein He "*came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (Mark 10:45) The humility of Jesus shines through in His willingness to serve others. Of course, as His servants, we are called to imitate Him.

Finally, Jesus gives various possible times of His return. The Jews counted three watches spanning from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. The second or third watches would be in the middle of the night. It is a time when most people are sleeping and preparation for departure is difficult because they are drowsy. In other words, those servants are blessed who are prepared even in the most difficult circumstances.

Of course, as Catholics we try to remain prepared via daily prayer, weekly Mass, monthly confession, and regular acts of charity. We stay close to Jesus by listening to Him via His Word and regular spiritual reading. In developing a habit by such spiritual practices, we will remain vigilant even in the most difficult circumstances. May the Lord send the Holy Spirit to help us remain prepared for His coming.