***Possible* Prayer of Church for The Last Sunday of Trinity November 22nd**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Heavenly Father, Your Church eagerly awaits the return of her Bridegroom. Grant that we would not grow weary. Strengthen us through Your Word and Sacraments, that we would ever hold fast to Your promise of salvation won for us by Christ, our Savior. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

LORD, our hope is in You. Grant that all pastors and servants of Your Church proclaim this hope in boldness and clarity. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Creator God, You have called us to build and to plant and so cultivate the world by our various vocations. Endow the faithful with Your Spirit, that they may bear rich fruit in their lives and enjoy the work of their hands. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

King of the nations, grant wisdom, humility and integrity to those who govern us, especially to our [US] President; our [OR] Governor; and all who make, administer and judge our laws, that the work of their hands would be of benefit to all whom they serve and in accordance with Your Will. Bring peace to our troubled world, that all would hear the message of the Gospel and rejoice in Your salvation. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, draw near to the suffering *[especially **Our Savior & Faith Prayers**] … and all those we each name in our hearts in personal [silent] prayer*. Grant healing and relief according to Your Will, and comfort them by the sure and certain hope we have in Christ Jesus. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

O God, You are LORD of those who are awake and those who have fallen asleep. You knit us together in the salvation of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Preserve our hope and teach us to number our days, until we enter together into the Kingdom of Your Son. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

LORD God, Heavenly Father, we here remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Praising His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

TRINITY-LAST Matthew 25:1-13 *WISE OR FOOLISH?!* 11.22.26 F.OS.L

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. *Matt.25:1-13*

FULFILLMENT Today is the Sunday of the **Fulfillment of all things;** the last Sunday of the year on the church's calendar. The "**Omega**" of all things, the Last Day when Jesus appears in great glory as King and Judge, suddenly and without warning, like a thief in the night, like a groom arriving for the wedding party at midnight.

PARABLE Hear the Parable of the 10 bridesmaids. They are **wise and foolish**. This isn't about morality, but rather about **faith**. In the language of the Scriptures, to be wise is to be believing, trusting. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* To be foolish is to be unbelieving. *"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"* The foolish took their lamps but no extra oil. The wise took jars of extra oil along with their lamps.

FASHIONISTAS The **foolish look downright sophisticated** with their cute little wedding lamps nestled in their perfectly manicured fingers. They are confident and carefree. They go about their lives as though the wedding were **just another thing on their list of things to do**. Go to the mall, get your hair done, go to a movie, go the wedding.

UNFASHIONABLE[?] **The wise look kind of foolish**, if not **unfashionable**, lugging around those Mason jars full of oil. Silly girls. What kind of look is that, carrying jugs of extra oil? What were they thinking? They act **as if this wedding were the biggest thing in their lives, the only thing**. They look as silly as little Linus from the old Peanuts cartoon, sitting in the field, waiting for the Great Pumpkin to appear in his pumpkin patch.

FOOLISH?! ***How foolish the waiting watchful church looks!*** How foolish you Baptized believers appear, watching and waiting for Jesus! How foolish to get up on a Sunday morning to **hear God's Word preached** to you when you could just as easily read it on your own. How foolish to hear the **forgiveness** of your sins when you already know you are forgiven. How **foolish to eat and drink** a bit of bread and a sip of wine believing it to be the **Body and Blood** of Jesus your Savior. How foolish to **pray, praise, give thanks** when there are surely "more important" things to do. How foolish to **give offerings to God** when there are so many things to spend your money on.

THE CHURCH'S MESSAGE How foolish of the church, to be more focused on the coming of the new creation than the problems of the old creation. How unfashionable to speak of sin and sacrifice, atoning blood, forgiveness when the world wants to be purpose-driven and successful. How silly of the church to preach Christ crucified for the sins of the world, knowing full well that the world clamors for miracles and celebrity and entertainment. **A Theology of the Cross?** That's as unfashionably silly and out of place in the world of religion as a Mason jar full of olive oil.

VILLAGE IDIOTS[?] Get used to it. Christians are the "**village idiots**" of religion. The rest of the religious world thinks we're nuts for believing that we are **justified before God entirely by His undeserved kindness, all because of Jesus' perfect life and death**, and **not** because of anything we do. That's crazy. Everyone knows you have to earn you own way, atone for your own sins, pursue your own path to enlightenment [...right?]. ...***Wrong.***

SHIP OF FOOLS We're a "ship of fools" who come to church not to be motivated, entertained, uplifted, challenged, …but **forgiven**. **We esteem Christ** instead of ourselves.

IN/SANE FAITH We're like people throwing a pool party in the shivering dead of Winter and saying, *"But Summer's just around the corner."* And the world politely says, *"Okay..."* and quickly makes their exit for more "sane" religion. We bury our dead **in the sure hope and confidence of the Resurrection** of the body. We dare to come into the presence of God, not boasting about all the great things we've done for God lately, but **admitting they're we're a bunch of screw-ups** who can't get anything right, even when we try. And the world shakes its head at us, as we sit in our pumpkin patch waiting for our Great Pumpkin to appear.

REVERSAL But in the end, when the midnight wake-up cry goes out, those who looked foolish turned out to be wise, while those who appeared so wise, wind up looking terribly foolish, running around in the middle of the night looking for oil that can't be found. Finding a closed door to a party for which they had an invitation. Hearing the terrible **word of exclusion, *"I don't know you."*** They were invited; they were part of the wedding party; they had a place at the Table. **But in their foolish unbelief, they are no longer even recognizable.**

"FIGURING" **The folly of the foolish lies in their** "**figuring**." They **figured** they knew the hour when the groom would make his appearance. They **figured** they had enough oil to last well into the evening. What they hadn't **figured** was that the Groom would be delayed, that they would fall asleep, that the Groom would show up a midnight. Who on earth starts a wedding part at midnight? They didn't figure He would show up so quickly and unexpectedly, that there would be no second chance, no opportunity to strike a deal with some oil merchant. Only a closed door and an exclusion. **Foolish figuring**.

NO ONE KNOWS *"You do not know the day or the hour."* That is **Jesus' Last Word** on the timing of the Last Day. It puts an end to all calculations and speculations. We're simply not given to know the times or the seasons. Every attempt to predict the day and the hour for this late, great planet earth has amounted to nothing but bird cage lining.

AHH, WE HAVE TIME… But, **Delay can bring a false sense of security**. Jesus didn't come yesterday. He hasn't appeared today, and maybe He won't appear tomorrow. We *think, "**Ahhh**, **There's always time**, **right**?"* God's way of time is not the same as ours. God works where everything is **packed into a moment**; we work in chronology - days, months, years. *"With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."* God isn't slow in coming; **He's patient and merciful.** He doesn't want anyone to perish; He wants all to come to repentance. But let no one say, ***"There's always more time."*** You do not know the day or the hour. I don't intend to scare you, but I do want to wake you up. Jesus wants His Church on the **alert, wide awake, watchful, ready for the cry at any hour, day or night.**

RICH IN MERCY **God is rich in His mercy**. The forgiveness and life that Jesus hung on the cross to win for the world, He gives out in not just one way, but many: in **Baptism**, in the spoken **Absolution** of sins, in the **Supper** and in the **Word** as it is preached and read. There is more forgiveness and life and salvation than you and I could ever imagine. More Jesus in Word and the Sacrament than we think that we need. Enough forgiveness and life to keep our lamps burning until the Last Day. Only an **unbelieving** fool would say, *"That's enough forgiveness and life for me, I don't need any more, thank you."* **Refusal of the gifts is foolish to the point of damnation.**

WHO DID IT FOR WHOM The wise bridesmaids knew **in Whom they hoped and for Whom they waited**. They lived and slept in the confidence of their Bridegroom's coming. They knew He was coming; they just didn't know when. And, **You know for Whom you wait, and He knows you.** He is the One Who **died** on a Cross for you, Who **rose** from the grave for you, who **sits enthroned in majesty** for you. He is the One who **Baptized** you, who forgives you, Who feeds you His **Body and Blood**, Who anoints you with His Spirit. More oil than you can possibly burn in an eternity.

LIVE WISELY **Fellow Christians,** To live as the wise in faith is to live in the hope and expectation of Jesus' Coming Day, whether that Day is **today, tomorrow, or the next day**. You can live and sleep and die in the confidence of Him Who once came for you **by crib and Cross**, Who comes to you now **by Word and Sacrament**, Who will come **in glory** on the Last Day to **raise you from the dead to eternal life**.

LAST DAY = *NEW* DAY The Last Day is also a New Day, the true Sabbath Day that embraces every day, from the Alpha to the Omega, the beginning to the end. A Day with neither evening or morning, an endless Day in which all creation rests in the light of Jesus Christ. *"Behold, I will create **new Heavens and a new Earth**." "Behold, I make **all things new**."* Sin and death are gone. *"The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

IT'S COMING. BE PREPARED **That Day is coming soon.** Christ is coming soon and quickly. He comes without warning. But you don't need a warning. You know. Such faith may seem as foolish as little Linus in the pumpkin patch. But when Christ Who is God's Wisdom in the Flesh makes His appearance, **our faith will be proven wise.** -- Keep the **lamp burning** in patient waiting for the Final Wonderful Glorious Day when **our Bridegroom *will* return to take us to the Great Wedding Feast forever**. ***"Amen. Even so, Come, LORD Jesus! And, Come Quickly!!" IJ'N, Amen. SDG***