



## A Reflection for Eighth Sunday of Trinity Readings - Hebrews 11.1-3, 8-16 & Matthew 25. 1-13

*'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you." Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'*

William Blake painted four versions of this subject for his patron Thomas Butts and this lucid watercolour is the earliest. The wise bridesmaids (virgins) are depicted in the left of the painting. They are elegant, palely luminous, and composed within a single plane, recalling classical low-relief sculpture. In contrast, their foolish companions at right are agitated and characterized by dark tones.

The image illustrates Jesus' teaching of the parable of the ten bridesmaids as he warns his listeners to be spiritually prepared.

A trumpeting angel flying overhead signifies that the moment of judgment has arrived.

Jesus is teaching the importance of personal responsibility for those who are his followers. He uses the imagery of bridesmaids who are waiting to welcome the returning bridegroom. It is late and the exact time of the bridegroom's return is unknown. A light is needed in order to see the bridegroom and to welcome him back. There are those who are waiting who have given thought to the situation and have prepared whilst remaining alert as they are vigilant for the overdue return of the bridegroom. But there are those who have veered away from the right path, their lights grow dim and will soon extinguish. The bridegroom can only be welcomed by those who have made ready for his arrival.

Jesus taught that there will come a time when he will return and his followers are to be ready. They are to take responsibility for their spiritual growth in order to be a light for him in this world and in readiness to welcome him when he returns.

Thank you for reading and keep safe.

The Reverend Nick Devenish

*Night Prayer from Cartmel Vicarage is live streamed from 9.00pm week nights on Facebook and will be back soon. Keep connected by going to the Cartmel Priory Facebook page.*

*Image - 'The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins' by William Blake*