



## Pentecost 23 – Father Joe’s Message

### *“Jesus just left Chicago”*

**Scripture References: Wisdom of Solomon: 6:12-20 & Matthew: 25: 1-13**

#### **“Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids**

Greetings Saints, Mona and I are delighted to be back among you again today as we continue our journey through this most beautiful of Pacific Northwestern Autumns. Leaves ablaze with color everywhere, stunning baby blue skies alternated with gray, misty drizzle days...soft days. And rain in abundance, nourishing our plants and trees, our rivers, streams and us with life giving and sustaining water. Water that cleanses, renews and sustains us. We are blessed mightily, Saints...by this place we call home.

We have also been truly blessed this week Saints with some most excellent Sacred Stories to learn about and learn from. So, let’s get started with Today’s Message entitled: “Jesus just left Chicago.”

Saints, today’s message is about wisdom and how we can find it in sometimes strange and unusual places, and our message today is also about focus and coming and going as we unwrap the learnings from The Wisdom of Solomon and in the Gospel of Matthew with the Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids.

Saints, we say some pretty amazing things in the opening words of our Liturgy of the Table:

We say, “We give you thanks and praise for in the ocean of your steadfast love, you bear us [you carry us; you lift us up] and place the Song of Your Spirit in our hearts.” ***Translation: “I love you. Recognize and listen to the Spirit that I have placed in you!”***

We say, “When we turn from your love and disrespect our Earth and each other, you do not abandon us.” ***Translation: “I love you unconditionally, when you don’t get it right, I expect you to keep trying!”***

We say, “Your Spirit speaks through elders, prophets and sages in every age [in every age!] to challenge us and to continually reveal The Vision of Your New Creation.” ***Translation: “I will never finish speaking to you. Spirit’s learning is alive and dynamic. Be watching for Me and My Messengers and learn from them!”***

In our opening lesson today from the Wisdom of Solomon we hear: ***“The beginning of Wisdom is the true desire to receive teaching,” and “Wisdom is radiant and unfading.” “She is easily discerned by those who love her.” “She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her...for she will be found sitting at the gate.”***

Wisdom...right in front of us...right here “sitting at the gate.” Wisdom found in strange and unusual places, from strange and unusual voices...Elders, Prophets and Sages in every age. Fresh Wisdom, relevant Wisdom, New Wisdom.

What I want to unwrap with you this morning in this context of “New Wisdom” is perhaps a unique and different take on the classic parable from Matthew 25, “The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids.”

The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids is one of a trilogy of parables in Matthew that deal with a pervasive eschatological theme...eschatology the study of end times. These are: The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids, The Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Judgement of the Nations. Each of these stories focus on appropriate preparations for the apocalyptic return of the Son of Man at the endtimes. These stories from Matthew are completely in sync with the historical Jesus that we know. Jesus as the itinerant first-century apocalyptic preacher and teacher, preaching adamantly and strongly about the return of both the Son of Man and the Messiah to restore Israel to greatness. The historical Jesus, an early disciple of John the Baptist and the Essenes whose overriding focus was preparation for the Apocalyptic Return of the Son of Man.

The classic, first-century interpretation of the Ten Bridesmaids Parable is exactly this. The Ten Bridesmaids is an allegory about the coming of the Son of Man (in Greek, The Parousia) for the Final Judgement, and entry into The Kingdom of Heaven. The setting for the parable is the “return of the groom (*Translation: Son of Man, Messiah, then Jesus*) to the Father’s house (*Translation: Kingdom of Heaven*), bringing His “new Bride” (*Translation: Israel as a whole, then specifically*

*Essenes and likeminded first-century thinkers*). The task of the Bridesmaids (*Translation: Jewish believers, then more specifically Christian believers*) is to welcome the Bride and Groom into the household. In Matthew's story, The Bridegroom was delayed. This is an interesting adaptation to the story. Originally, Jesus and the apocalyptic preachers of the first-century taught that the End Time would be before the end of their generation, in their lifetime. Paul teaches this as well, as he expected the Apocalypse to occur before his death. When the Apocalypse did not occur, the story had to be modified, thus, "...the Bridegroom was delayed." And when the un-wise, unprepared Bridesmaids (*Translation: those Christians who were not believing or living correctly*) left to secure more oil, the Bridegroom (Son of Man-Messiah-Jesus) came and the wise, prepared Bridesmaids (*Translation: right living/right believing Christians*) enter the Wedding Feast (*Translation: Heaven/Kingdom of God*) and the doors were shut, preventing the unwise Bridesmaids from entering the celebration. The classic, traditional Message here is still a lot like it was in the first-century. Jesus' Next Coming is just around the corner, it is not going to be good if you are caught unaware or unprepared so you had better keep yourself "spiritually and doctrinally sorted" or you won't be seeing the party.

Now Saints, while I can see this interpretation of the story reasonably clearly through my first-century contextual looking glass, my 21<sup>st</sup> century view sees something quite different. I find the first-century Eschatology and its' Apocalyptic World View not particularly helpful in my day-to-day participation in the Jesus Movement.

**Rather than focusing on the old wisdom around this parable, I personally prefer something newer, fresher. Rather than focusing on preparing for the Jesus that is coming, I prefer to focus on helping the Jesus that is already here! The Jesus that is present here and now. The immanent Jesus and his Sacred Cousin Spirit, both alive, well and at work in the world.**

So this morning, I would like to treat you to some fresh/relevant/strong Wisdom from the Blues that comes from one of my favorite elders, prophets and sages: that "Little Ole' Band from Texas, ZZ Top." For those of you that aren't familiar with the Gospel of ZZ Top there are three "writers" in the band: Billy Gibbons, Frank Beard and Dusty Hill. They are famous for such "scriptural classics" as:

“Sharp Dressed Man” and “LaGrange.” But for today, I want to focus on what I think, is one of their best “gospels” ... “Jesus Just Left Chicago.” It goes like this:

*Jesus just left Chicago  
And he's bound for New Orleans  
Well now, Jesus just left Chicago  
And he's bound for New Orleans  
Yeah, yeah  
Workin' from one end to the other and all points in between*

*Took a jump through Mississippi  
Well, muddy water turned to wine  
Took a jump through Mississippi  
Muddy water turned to wine  
Yeah, yeah*

*Then out to California through the forests and the pines  
Ah, take me with you, Jesus  
You might not see him in person  
But he'll see you just the same  
You might not see him in person  
But he'll see you just the same  
Yeah, yeah*

*You don't have to worry 'cause takin' care of business is his name*

This Saints, I believe our focus -- and Jesus' focus -- is not on the End Times or the Apocalypse. Don't worry about the Apocalyptic Matthew-created Jesus character that closed the door to the unwise Bridesmaids. **Instead, see the ZZ Top Jesus that is right in front of us asking us to share our oil, so we can all go to the Party!**

*You might not see him in person  
But he'll see you just the same  
You might not see him in person  
But he'll see you just the same  
Yeah, yeah*

*You don't have to worry 'cause takin' care of business is his name*

At the end of the day Saints, we learned from the Wisdom of Solomon, “...the beginning of wisdom is the desire to receive teaching and the desire to be taught.”

Saint's lets stop waiting for Jesus' next coming and acknowledge that Jesus is already here. See His Face in your Family and in your Community. See His Face in your opponents and those with whom we do not agree. See His Face in the face of a stranger. Because as we learned today from the Wisdom of Solomon and the Gospel of ZZ Top:

***You might not see him in person  
But he'll see you just the same  
You might not see him in person  
But he'll see you just the same  
Yeah, yeah***

***You don't have to worry 'cause takin' care of business is his name***

*Wisdom of Solomon*

*Jesus is radiant and unfading; Jesus is easily discerned by those who love Him. Jesus hastens to make himself known to those who desire Him. One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for He will be found sitting at the gate. To fix one's thoughts on Jesus is perfect understanding, and one who is vigilant on His account will soon be free from care. And Jesus goes about seeking us and He graciously appears to us in our paths and meets us in every thought.*

Saint's Jesus just left Chicago, and He's bound for New Orleans...  
Spread the Word, Alleluia



ZZ Top's Jesus Just Left Chicago:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sZRoaouiVk>