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DANIEL 12:5-13 THE END?

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. ⁶ One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

⁷ The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"

⁹ He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

¹¹ "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

¹³ "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance. "

At the end of the Liturgy, the deacon or priest stands before the people and dismisses them with the words, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord," or "Let us go forth in the name of Christ." Like Daniel, we have witnessed in Word and Sacrament things that we cannot fully understand. There is mystery in our worship because our God is bigger than our capacity to understand. Each time we gather to worship we are like the wise virgins in Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins, who keep their stock of oil full so they will be ready when the Bridegroom returns (Matthew 25:1-13). That oil is the grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word of God that "*is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path*" (Psalm 119-105). Yet the difference between the wise and the foolish is that the wise know what they cannot know. God reveals more to us than we can possibly know, but he has also made it abundantly clear that we cannot know when the end will come (Matthew 24:36). This also is a grace because it does not allow us to ignore God until our alarm goes off in time for us to "get it right." In contrast, we are called to live in constant relationship with God through whom we are blessed moment by moment by a growing knowledge of his glorious nature. The timing of the end is not important if we live our lives in a state of preparedness, not because we will avoid the consequences of being unprepared, but because we can experience the divine and eternal relationship God has promised us even in the present.

"As for you, go your way till the end." We must constantly go to God to have our lamps filled with oil, but we must remember that the purpose of the lamp is to light up the world around us. Our focus is to be on living in obedience today, which is to let our light shine. As Jesus said: "*...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). That is our God-given way. May we persevere in that way until the end.

May the focus of my life be always on you, O God. Whichever comes first, the End or the end of my life in this world, may I never allow my light to flicker or fail. May I ever live in the hope of being raised to life eternal. Amen.