

[OPENING PRAYERS AND HOLY COMMUNION ARE AVAILABLE AS A VIDEO ON OUR ONLINE SUNDAY SERVICES PAGE HERE](#) OR ON OUR [YOUTUBE PAGE HERE](#)

PART 1 – OPENING PRAYERS

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His steadfast love endures for ever!
Grace and peace be with you
and also with you.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Almighty God
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

My brothers and sisters, believing God is faithful to forgive, let us rid ourselves of what we need to carry no longer.

Merciful God,
our maker and our judge,
we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
and in what we have failed to do:
we have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.
Father, forgive us.
Strengthen us to love and obey you
in newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,
who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith:
pardon you and set you free from all your sins,
strengthen you in all goodness
and keep you in eternal life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternal God and Father,
by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed:
guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service, and live this
day in love to one another and to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO – PRESS THE SPACEBAR TO PAUSE

PART 2 — AN ALL AGE VIDEO “*WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?*” AND DOWNLOADABLE MATERIAL FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN [HERE](#)

PART 3 — LOOK UP AND READ THROUGH THE READINGS, LISTEN TO THE [SERMON PODCAST](#) (READ ALONG IF YOU WISH) BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE, AND PRAY THE INTERCESSIONS, TODAY BY REV SUE BROOKS.

READINGS (NRSV preferred)

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

Psalm 70

Matthew 25:1-13

SERMON BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE

Available to listen online and/or download – access via Pentecost 2020 link and notice also a reasonable library of past sermons for you to listen to as you exercise or meditate...

*Let us pray,
In the name of our creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Amen.*

I find it more and more an interesting question as to how you read the Bible. Or, how one relates to the Bible. Is it a rule book, dictated from God? Is it a book that needs to be decoded? Can it be read in a plain literal fashion?

The Bible itself as a topic is hugely significant in its bearing on our faith. The Bible can confuse us, embarrass us, contradict itself, make outrageous statements and even be inaccurate. There are lots of wonderful things in the Bible, but we often talk about those while keeping quiet about the other!

Yet recognizing the tensions the Bible produces sharpens our reading and understanding. Also recognizing the sort of literature we are reading at that particular time, for the Bible has many different kinds of literary genre, even within a gospel, recognizing the genre will change the perspective.

Like the text from today's gospel. It is the genre of allegory. (Note the heading The parable of the 10 bridesmaids is not original text). An allegory is different to a parable which uses a life situation to create an illustration. There is much to explore in an illustration, but it is fairly obvious what it is all about on the surface. The allegory constructs a story, often more complex and obviously fictional, where more of the details correspond to aspects of what is being taught. Jesus' main concern is not about how many litres of candle oil bridesmaids need.

But certain words pop out which have much significance attached to them, like: wedding feast, bridegroom, night, light, wisdom, folly, sleeping and awake. Hence a story has been constructed to pick up on all these significant words. Jesus has used these words quite often in his teaching.

But also for us, a couple of millennia later, it is helpful to know a bit more about the ancient traditions.

In a wedding that would last over a number of days, the bridegroom was required to arrive at the home of the bride's family, claim the bride, and take her to his own house. The bridesmaids, or more accurately young maidens, waited at the groom's house, ready to welcome the couple and celebrate their new beginning. Waiting for the bridegroom meant being prepared, not merely passing time. There was probably no set time for the bridegroom to arrive, so the issue was not punctuality. Delays were common. But they were to have their oil lamps at the ready, for it would be night time when the bridegroom and his bride arrived.

Night time processions were also quite common being led by lit torches rather than oil lamps. It is likely the young maidens had torches with rags that would be doused in the oil to keep them alight. So with all that in mind, we can look at each of the significant words in turn.

The wedding feast has been the subject of many stories and parables, and is often one of controversy. People choose or choose not to come.

Some come in the wrong clothes. People who were originally not invited, are issued with one. Who would of thought weddings could be so stressful!

Interesting, isn't it, that something we may so look forward to, can yet produce much angst. Even the most well laid plans do not always go to plan.

The bridegroom, in ancient days, was more the centre of attention than the bride, as it is today! The spotlight shines on him as he goes to collect his bride, and as he escorts her back to his place. The action all happens with him. At the end five of the maidens get left behind for not keeping up.

Five of the maidens were *wise*.

Actually, not so much wise, but prudent, the practical type of wisdom is what is being described here. Realizing that not all goes to plan, they have extra oil on hand should they need it.

Now we may be shocked that they did not share their oil with their foolish sisters, yet this is another case of their practical wisdom. To share the oil among all ten torches would simply waste all the oil. The rags have to be doused in the oil, not have a few drips on it. To share the oil would have served no purpose at all.

Five *foolish* maidens.

Five inattentive maidens who have been caught short.

Five desperate maidens hoping that others will bail them out.

Five maidens who have to go out and search for more oil elsewhere, out there in the dark, and consequently arrive back after the door has been shut.

Five maidens who are not recognised by the bridegroom.

It is *night*, it is dark and hard to tell what time it is. The time seems long. During this time, the maidens get drowsy and fall asleep. Then suddenly in the midst of the darkness, there is a call to wake up and to replenish your *light*.

The maidens each have their lamp, or torch to tend. The lamp does not just look after itself. The lamp is not an end in itself, it depends upon its keeper.

Sleep is natural.

No person can go without sleeping.

Sleep is a part of life.

As is *waking up*.

Our bodies do not forget to wake up.

But we can be lazy, we can choose to ignore the alarm clock!

There may be other reasons we choose to ignore the time to be awake.

And *waiting*, particularly in our culture, we are not good waiters.

We expect everything to happen faster: faster computers, fast food, and faster pain killers!

We'd rather be asleep while having to wait, rather than be aware of waiting.

Overall, this story appears in a collection of stories and illustrations about the sign of Jesus' coming and the end of the age.

A hot topic in the time of Matthew the gospel writer's community. Is it a hot topic for us?

Maybe we are not looking for the end of the age, or the end of the world, but surely we do look for God's presence in our lives.

And is not faith something we take on for the long haul? We do have many times, some of them very long in which we are waiting for a sign, or a deliverance, or a healing, for something to change, something that tells us that God indeed is with us and we're ok.

And there are times that our lamps burn low, flicker and even diminish. When faith and obedience dries up. What do you do when that happens? What do you do?

Faith for the long haul means it is not just for the good times, but also for the duration of the bad.

To not just play peacemaker for one day, but through the long years of hostilities.

To not just be merciful for one evening which may make you feel good.

But to be merciful month after month of persecution.

What do you do to keep that light alight?

Well, you might say, I am keeping my light alight, but what of my foolish sister?

How can I help hers?

It is the quirk, the stumbling stone of this story, that there are some things that cannot be shared, some things that cannot be obtained second hand. It is our gift of freewill, the will to choose life, or to choose death.

We all know we cannot make another person do or believe something unless they want to.

In our first reading, Joshua could not choose for others to follow God.

He also warned them of glibly declaring they had no problem.

In terms of evangelism, no matter what one might do, unless the other is coming even halfway to meet them, nothing happens.

Yet when the other does come halfway, the relationship just flourishes.

I believe God's Spirit prompts and opens hearts, *but* does not override.

Yet the Spirit is there and will speak when the person is prepared to start listening.

Maybe there is a way we can encourage others to listen deep within themselves to the Spirit's call?

But it may involve for some a journey out into the dark and a banging on the closed door to realize it.

But is the shut door the last word? The door of the tomb which appeared to be shut permanently, with all hope gone, was then found open on the third day by the God who gives new hope.

You might like to reflect on these two questions:

1. What causes the light of your actions and attitudes of faith to flicker and diminish?
2. What helps you to reconnect with the light when you feel it has gone out?

Let us pray:

God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS BY REV SUE BROOKS

Ever-living God, in every generation you have cared for your people, and your mercy is everlasting:

Hear the prayers we bring for your world and your church.

We pray for the peoples of every land:

For all who suffer the horrors of war, for soldiers, civilians and refugees,

For those all over the world who are suffering from the affects of Covid 19,

For those professionals who are testing and caring for the many thousands whose lives have been affected, for the families who have lost loved ones, and for the many people who are working tirelessly to create a vaccine.

For all who endure the effects of famine, disease and natural disasters.

And for all who govern and those who administer law.

We give you thanks for all who work to bring an end to oppression and suffering remembering especially...

Those who have given their lives that others may live.

Loving God, we wait for your coming, for your reign of justice and peace.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for your church throughout the world,

For all priests and pastors, teachers, family and youth workers;

For the newly baptised, confirmed and those faith has grown cold;

For all those who work=worship or minister in our parish.

We give you thanks for all who bring to others your gospel of salvation, remembering especially those who work in places that are dangerous, remote or unresponsive

Loving God, we wait for your coming, for your reign of justice and peace.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the communities to which we live.

For those without work and those with too much responsibility

For those who are forgotten, unwanted or abused;

For our families, our friends and all whom we love,

We give you thanks for all those whose work enriches our community, remembering especially all who give their time to care for the needy, those who have been affected with Covid 19, the elderly and the young.

Loving God, we wait for your coming, for your reign of justice and peace.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all those in trouble or distress;

For the destitute and those who despair for the future

For the broken hearted and all who mourn for loved ones;

For those in mental torment, for the sick and the dying,

Remembering those on our hearts at this time ...

We give thanks for all who bring comfort, hope and relief to your people, remembering especially all the medical staff, chaplains and pastoral workers.

Loving God, we wait for your coming, for your reign of justice and peace.

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for all who have served you faithfully to their life's end, for Lyn Whelan and...

Keep us ever watchful and ready for the day of your coming, that we may hear with joy the archangel's call, and with all who have died in Christ, rise to meet you.

Loving God, we wait for your coming in glory;

In your mercy, hear our prayer.

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray:

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are yours now and for ever. Amen.

PLEASE RESUME THE VIDEO FOR HOLY COMMUNION BY PRESSING THE SPACEBAR

GREETING OF PEACE

We are the body of Christ.

His Spirit is with us.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.

Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

OPENING (GREAT THANKSGIVING)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

COMMUNION

You are worthy, our Lord and God,

to receive glory and honour and power,

for you created all things,

making us in your own image.

We praise you for your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ,

who by his death on the cross

and rising to new life

offered the one true sacrifice for sin

and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory,

hosanna in the highest.

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread
and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is
my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said,
'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'
Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ
and to remember all he has done for us:
Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and
bringing your peace to this world that you have made.
Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessing and honour and glory and power,
are yours forever and ever. Amen

**THE BREAKING AND SHARING
OF THE BREAD AND WINE.**

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one
bread:
so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

THE COMMUNION

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray together:

We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all peoples.
Amen.

BLESSING

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge
and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

DISMISSAL

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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