

Matthew 25: 1-13

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." 9 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." 10 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. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." 12 But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you." 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

You are invited to the wedding. Are you ready? Are you prepared? Oh! Wait a moment, there is a delay ... the bridegroom is not yet available ... First, I want to mention a couple of things ... you see, today's message comes from the wedding buffet table.

This is Veteran's Day weekend. I want to say: "Thank you for your service."

"Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor **ALL** those who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime,".

The holiday "is largely intended to thank **LIVING** veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who served - not only those who died - have sacrificed and done their duty."

Meanwhile: Memorial Day, is meant to honor those who have died while serving.

The roots of Veterans Day go back nearly 100 years. During the same time when the mission start of a Norwegian Lutheran Church was being considered in Pasadena. We worship today at Hill Avenue Grace Lutheran, established in February of 1919.

Fighting during WWI had stopped on Nov. 11, 1918 (three months before this congregation was established) due to an armistice between the Germans and the Allies. Nov. 11 was commemorated as Armistice Day by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919.

A resolution passed by Congress in 1926, called for Nov. 11 to be remembered every year "with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations."

In 1938, Armistice Day was officially made a legal public holiday.

Many American soldiers lost their lives during WWII and the Korean War. In the wake of these wars, Armistice Day was renamed Veterans Day in 1954.

So, today we pray:

A Prayer for Veterans Day

Father, we could never thank our military men and women enough for their courageous service and sacrifice to our country and its people. So, today we lift our voices to express gratefulness and honor to these military troops both from the past and present. Show us ways in our communities, churches, and families to thank and love them better. Keep and protect these heroes and their families, in the powerful name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Moving along the wedding buffet table, I want to mention **Soren Kierkegaard** who was born in Copenhagen, Denmark and **died** Nov. 11, 1855, (162 years ago) he was a Danish philosopher, theologian, and cultural critic who was a major influence on existentialism and Protestant theology in the 20th century.

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Kierkegaard's Religion

Kierkegaard styled himself above all as a religious poet. The religion to which he sought to relate his readers is Christianity. The type of Christianity that underlies his writings is a very serious strain of Lutheran pietism informed by the dour values of sin, guilt, suffering, and individual responsibility. Kierkegaard was immersed in these values in the family home through his father.

For Kierkegaard Christian faith is not a matter of regurgitating church dogma. It is a matter of individual subjective passion, which cannot be mediated by the clergy or by human artefacts. **Faith** is the most important task to be achieved by a human being, because only on the basis of faith does an individual have a chance to become a true self. This self is the life-work which God judges for eternity.

The individual (you and me) are subject to an enormous burden of responsibility we have a choice to make: what we believe leads to eternal salvation or damnation. Faith is to believe in God who is not seen; whereas, some choose to not have faith and reject the presence of God. Our Anxiety or dread is a two-sided emotion: on one side is the dread burden of choosing for eternity; on the other side is the exhilaration of freedom in choosing oneself. Our choice occurs in the instant, and it is that point when temporal time and eternity intersect—

But the choice of faith is not made once and for all. It is essential that faith be constantly renewed by means of repeated avowals of faith. Our very existence depends upon this repetition. We live with constant change, progress and renewal.

As Christians, we acknowledge a “power which constituted life.”

We must constantly renew our faith in “the power which we believe created it.”

There is no *mediation* between the individual and God by priest or by logical system. **There is only the individual's own repetition of faith. This repetition of faith is the way the self relates itself to itself and to the power which constituted it, i.e., the repetition of faith is the self.**

So, we live in waiting (knowing there is more) In faith we wait and hope and do what we must to preserve the word of God, the ministry of God, extend the Call of God.

And so, we are here today, November 12, 2017, living the faith, awaiting the Call for a new pastor. HAGL ... today, we participate in a leap of faith. We will talk together as the body of Christ and make our best effort to put together language and feelings that will attract, inspire and motivate our next pastor. We will create a profile.

So, The wedding feast is upon us: Here is the main course on the buffet table

It's been almost a year now, and we are waiting.

Think about the refrain from Tom Petty's “The Waiting” when you hear the parable of the bridesmaids. “The waiting is the hardest part. Every day you see one more card. You take it on faith, You take it to the heart. The waiting is the hardest part.”

What is distinctive about this parable is its focus on the delayed return of the expected one. The passage does not simply call for right action in the groom's absence. It calls for recognition that he may be delayed.

By the time Matthew wrote this parable, the discipleship community may have been waiting for Jesus' return for fifty years or more.

- Most of the eye-witnesses were likely dead.
- The church had spread, but it had also been oppressed.

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- The Temple revered by both the Jews who confessed Jesus and those who did not had been destroyed, wreaking havoc on Jewish and Christian communities (sometimes worshipping together) alike.
- Where was Jesus?
- Yes, the waiting is the hardest part.

We are waiting.

The difficult wait is still present. Perhaps more than ever, as we live in a culture where delayed gratification is nearly intolerable, and any waiting is often seen as a waste of time.

Waiting for something good –

- the birth of a healthy child,
- the closing on the house of your dreams,
- the promotion in a job or acceptance from college –

is a lot different than waiting for something that is hard – waiting to see if this time you will be able to get pregnant, or for the foreclosure of your home because you couldn't make the payment, or the doctor's report confirming that the cancer has returned.

And whether you are waiting for something good or bad, when the anticipated arrival is delayed, it's almost always anxiety-provoking:

The waiting, indeed, is the hardest part.

Perhaps we need to consider whether **waiting can at times be seen as a gift** rather than *obstacle*? Perhaps practice in waiting for those things we look forward to can help us to increase our patience and perseverance not only in our faith, but in other areas of our life as well.

When waiting is not for something positive, or when it is made harder by delay, you will not wait alone. Trust your faith and the presence of God. The obvious tragedy in the parable is that five of the bridesmaids took no oil at all. They didn't run out. They just didn't bring any, making no plans, anticipating no delay. Surely there is something to learn here. But the less obvious, but also poignant, tragedy is that the five who had brought "flasks of oil" would not share. Why do they assume there will not be enough for all? The announcement of the groom's imminent arrival had already been sounded, after all. We also learn from the wise but ungenerous bridesmaids.

We often wonder what we can do as communities of faith to make what we offer more attractive to a culture increasingly disinterested with organized religion. Might we offer ourselves as a community that....

- Can we offer ourselves as a genuine community in a world where more and more people feel isolated?
- A community that celebrates together.
- That slows down to prepare together.
- And that waits together,

Making sure when the waiting is the hardest part that no one – not one person – must wait alone? The waiting is the hardest part. We can't change that reality, but we can change the experience by waiting together, in Christian solidarity, community, and fellowship.

Waiting is hard, but the delays are a part of our faith journey. AMEN.

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