

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Remembrance Sunday

Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

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## Words of Welcome

Are you someone who really dislikes waiting or are you the patient sort? Maybe you are someone who is willing to wait for somethings, but not for others. Sometimes waiting means you have to be willing to be in it for the long haul if you want to see or experience the reward. Stick with me and together we will see what it means to patiently, and fruitfully wait. We begin with the call to worship.

## Call to Worship

God has gathered us to this place,  
**where we hear those stories which show us  
what the kingdom of God is like.**

God summons us to this place,  
**where we can learn how to serve our God  
without reservation, or hesitation.**

God will send us from this place,  
**to tell others of God's hopes and dreams,  
so they, too, can choose to follow God.**

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## Hymn

*There's a spirit in the air*

764

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| 1. There's a spirit in the air,<br>telling Christians everywhere:<br>'Praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working, in our world!' | 2. Lose your shyness, find your tongue,<br>tell the world what God has done:<br>God in Christ has come to stay.<br>Live tomorrow's life today! |
| 3. When believers break the bread,<br>when a hungry child is fed,<br>praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working, in our world.   | 4. Still the Spirit gives us light,<br>seeing wrong and setting right:<br>God in Christ has come to stay.<br>Live tomorrow's life today!       |
| 5. When a stranger's not alone,<br>where the homeless find a home,<br>praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working, in our world.  | 6. May the Spirit fill our praise,<br>guide our thoughts and change our ways<br>God in Christ has come to stay.<br>Live tomorrow's life today! |
| 7. There's a Spirit in the air,<br>calling people everywhere:<br>praise the love that Christ revealed,<br>living, working, in our world.       |  |

"There's a spirit in the air, telling Christians everywhere,"  
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## Opening Prayer

God of yesterday, today and forever,  
You are the God of every generation, and your love endures forever.  
You have protected us during difficult times, for your compassion is everlasting.  
You have shown us the path to truth and life in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
We give you thanks, O God, that you are always near.

God of wisdom, as we worship, we seek insight and understanding from your Word read and proclaimed this day. Move in us by your Spirit to open our hearts and minds to receive your message in the scriptures and respond in faithfulness.

In this time, we declare our love and loyalty to you, and offer you our service in prayer, in praise, and in practice, this day and every day, our one true God, whom we know and love as Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.

Sheltering God, we need your protection and redemption in these complex days. Yet, so often we fail to serve you in sincerity and faithfulness. Today, we come before you to confess our shortcomings, confident in your mercy.

We confess that we are often short-sighted, caring more about ourselves today than about future generations. In our selfishness, we have harmed the planet and perpetuated division among nations and neighbours. We ignore the needs of those around us, especially when caring for them would require us to change our habits or our hearts. Forgive us, O God, and show us ways to transform our lives to reflect our commitment to Christ more fully. Amen.

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## Assurance of Pardon

Christ died so that we might live.  
Through his undying love, we have been forgiven.  
Rejoice in the forgiveness God offers us.  
Be at peace with God and yourself,  
and make peace with your neighbours, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Hear now a word from the Gospel of Matthew.

## Scripture Reading Matthew 25:1-13

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

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Reflection** In it for the long haul

We hate waiting. There always seems to be something better to do with our time than wait. We dislike waiting to go through what can seem like the endless choices to make when trying to navigate a company’s phone system only to be put on hold. We dislike waiting in line at grocery stores, banks, and fast-food drive thrus, because even fast-food drive thrus are not fast enough. We think that banks are creating online options and drive thrus because they are trying to get away from employing actual people, but it is just as much that most of us like being able to do things from the comfort of our own home. Prior to Covid people were already starting down a road of online shopping options, Covid has just sped up the process. Many people are ordering their groceries online and waiting for someone to deliver them to their car or home. We are still waiting, but it allows us to do something else in the meantime, whether watch another Tik Tok on the phone, check up on emails, or a few tasks at home.

We don’t like to do the hard work of waiting to learn how to play an instrument. Younger generations are not waiting a life time for a new house and, pre-Covid, to taking family trips to places around the world. The child’s incessant questioning about “Are we there yet?” is now the mantra of generations.

This was kind of what was happening in this story that Matthew writes about as an experience with Jesus. Matthew’s Christian community was having an “Are we there yet?” moment. Christians living in the first years and decades after Jesus’ death were waiting for Christ’s return when everything would be set right – but it wasn’t happening. It was turning more into a marathon, like learning to play an instrument where it takes not just a few hours, or days, but rather a lifetime of learning new music and experiencing the instrument and music in new ways. How about the hours that can be spent to become a competitive athlete, or to even build or maintain a certain level of fitness? Quit doing the exercise, and you lose muscle mass, and ability. Skills for any thing can become rusty when not used.

It would seem that the parable of the ten bridesmaids is something along that line. As I read reference material, I got the sense that there is no great consensus on how to approach this particular parable. At one time people were warned to not be like the foolish bridesmaids and run out of oil, addressing the oil as good works. But if we are saved by faith then making sure we are doing enough good works to get into heaven before the door to the wedding banquet is shut appears to be at odds.

A few things to note when reading this parable may be helpful. All of the bridesmaids had made sure they had lamps and oil. It wasn't like anyone went out not prepared to wait for a while. All of the bridesmaids "became drowsy and slept" as they were waiting. All of them trimmed their lamps. There was really no way to distinguish between the foolishness and the wise other than the flasks of oil that five of them carried and the fact that when the wait became much longer than anticipated they had extra oil.

Now it would seem a very unchristian thing to not be willing to share oil. I wondered why they couldn't share their light, but that might be where some of the meaning in this parable lies for us. Again, know that I am speculating based on what I have learned by reading and pondering this parable, could it be that there are some things that as Christians we cannot share? I can share knowledge and experience, but I cannot do your faith for you, just as you cannot do it for me. We can guide one another, be an example, but we cannot take on the burden, joy, hope, and work of being a Christian for another person.

Though we are not saved by our good works, our response to God for God's provision, goodness, presence, love, and forgiveness, is to extend that to others. Work that we gladly do because of God in our lives and we do it from the time we are able to understand what it means to love because God first loved us. We cannot do that work for another. Just like having enough oil for a long wait, each of us is responsible for our own journey.

One other piece to point out is that none of us gets to judge the other's journey. There is only one bridegroom. In this story it is Jesus. He is the one who says, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you." We cannot look at someone and think because they are not living out their faith in the way that we think is the way, that they have got it wrong.

Please understand, that if one is hurting someone, taking advantage of them, disrespecting them, in other words, not caring for another's well being, it can be pretty safe to say they are not living their lives as a Christian. This particular passage was addressed to those who were already professing Christians. It is directed at you and me, those of us who claim to be Christian. It is a moment to pause and reflect on whether or not our lives are examples of a faith that is in it for the long haul.

Though we are not to judge, our lives will either be beacons of light to someone who has lost their way, or continue to be proof to those who don't believe that Christianity is worth their time and effort, that their assessment is correct. Going back to other teachings of Jesus, are we a light to the world and salt of the earth, or have we covered our faith over, lost our saltiness, and so hidden God's love for us and others?

Making sure there is enough oil for our lamps, trimming our wicks, that is all part of living out our faith, not just for the moment, but over the long haul. Staying connected to Christian community, studying scriptures, prayer, helping those who are struggling, extending grace, forgiveness, and love, these are all part of the oil and sustaining work of the Christian who trusts that God will come, if not in our time, in a time to come. But

we know neither the day nor the hour, so in the meantime we are diligent, aware, caring, living out our faith each day as best we can.

Though the parable seems harsh and there is judgement, remember also that after this time of teaching, Jesus heads to Jerusalem knowing that he will die. Knowing that the weight of the world will be on his shoulders and carried in his body as he heads to the cross. And he still did it because he chose to make a way for us to be one with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So, do not be afraid, do not judge. Rest, trim your wicks, continue to grow and mature in your faith. Love and be loved, know that you are loved. Pay attention to yourself and others. You may be the reminder or the example that guides another to being sure that they are prepared, ready for the time when the bridegroom arrives. Trust that the kingdom of heaven is already here on earth and we are the living examples of that.

You are light. You are salt. You are followers of Christ, and that is a transforming adventure. Be in it for the long haul. Amen.

### **Invitation to make an offering**

God is generous and gracious; we have received so much from God in Christ and in creation. So, we offer gifts that may be blessed so they will speak of God's love for the world in all its detail, and for people in all our diversity.

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If you would like to make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information.

### **Closing Prayer**

God of each life and all lives,  
in every generation you have been present with your people:  
in times of poverty and prosperity,  
in times of sorrow and joy,  
in times of health and pandemic,  
in times of war and peace.

Today, we remember your gracious care in times of crisis,  
and give thanks for the courage and sacrifice of the women, men and families  
of the Canadian armed forces who have worked for peace, justice and protection in  
so many different times and places. Support those who have finished their time of  
service and still face challenges in civilian life.

God of promise and peace, we thank you for the places where conflicts have ended,  
peace has been restored and where citizens can enjoy secure freedoms and human  
rights. Where people are oppressed and dissent restricted, encourage those who  
witness and work for justice to be established.

God of wholeness and hope, we thank you for those called to serve others in their home communities, wherever they call home. Especially we give thanks for those in our communities working hard in the face of COVID-19. May they know your protection and show your love in all they do.

God of commitment and courage, we thank you for the many organizations in Canada working to bring hope to people facing social exclusion, discrimination or exploitation. Inspire leaders in our communities to provide access to the support they need to thrive. May all your beloved children enjoy the life you desire for them.

God of Christ in community, we thank you for the dedication of those who serve in the church. May your church always be a place of hope, healing and welcome. Guide our congregation and denomination through these challenging days so that those who turn to us will find us faithful.

Eternal God, your promises endure from generation to generation. Knowing your steadfast love, we trust you to answer our prayers according to your generous mercy and infinite wisdom, offering ourselves in service with the words Jesus taught us to pray:

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## 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 forever. Amen.**

## Hymn

*May the God of hope go with us every day*

726

May the God of hope go with us every day,  
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.  
May the God of justice speed us on our way,  
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

### *Refrain*

*Praying, let us work for peace, singing, share our joy with all.  
working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

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## Benediction

Go out to stay awake! Go out to keep alert and be ready!  
For we do not know the day or the hour,  
but we do know that God goes with us at all hours, on all days.

Go with the love of God, the peace of Christ,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit.  
Go to witness and serve! Amen.

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1990/wors>