St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

http://standrewspres-tbay.ca - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

24th Sunday after Pentecost - November 8, 2026

Call to Worship

God of all times and places, we gather to worship you.
We turn our eyes to you and rejoice in your presence.
God of all life and love, we gather to sing your praise.
We turn our eyes to you and marvel at your power and your promise.
God of all wisdom and wonder, we gather to learn from your Son.
We turn our eyes toward Christ and wait for your Word to lead us.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 24th Sunday after Pentecost. Remembrance Sunday. November 8, 2026. Year A.

Hymn *To God be the glory* 350

1. To God be the glory, who great things has done!
   God so loved the world! —freely sending the Son,
   who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
   and opened the lifegate that all may go in.

Refrain
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear God's voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
Oh come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give God the glory, who great things has done.

2. Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood
   to every believer the promise of God,
   that when the offender, repenting, believes,
   through Jesus' atonement, full pardon receives!

Refrain

3. Great things God has taught us, great things God has done
   and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,
   but purer and higher and greater will be
   our wonder, our gladness, when Jesus we see!

Refrain

"To God be the glory," Words by Fanny J. Crosby. This version © The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Used by permission.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of grace and purpose,
you are the source of our lives and the source of all our possibilities.
You call us to serve in your world and inspire us to choose a purpose
for ourselves that will express your goodness and mercy.
Jesus has shown us many ways to serve with courage and compassion.
The Holy Spirit opens doors for us to act with love and loyalty.

Draw near to us in this time of worship and show us where you need us to be so that our lives may bring you honour, Source, Saviour and Spirit of Life.

God of mercy,
you call us to love our neighbours and serve your purposes.
We confess that this is easier said than done.
When things get complicated, we lose patience and turn away.
When we are unprepared for a challenge,
we excuse ourselves from taking part.

Forgive us, O God.

Renew our willingness to put ourselves on the line for your love.
Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

This is our assurance: God forgives us.
This is our hope: God's love is everlasting.
This is our truth: God is with us always.
We will speak the truth; we will live the hope;
we will share God's mercy. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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Prayer for Understanding

God of prophets and parables, your Word can meet us with a challenge, a puzzle and a promise. Send your Spirit with the gifts of understanding to grasp the puzzle and courage to take up the challenge and the promise, through Christ, your Living Word.

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Scripture Reading Matthew 25:1-13

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women 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 young women 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 young women 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.”

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Message The Waiting

There are few scriptures that have caused as much consternation as this one. I have never quite understood all of the connotations, given the many ways it has been preached. And after hours of reading in preparation for writing this sermon, it is clear that no one fully understands this parable of the ten bridesmaids. Some scholars and preachers get focused on what the oil in the lamps represents, or the shut door, or the wedding banquet, or the bridegroom, or the wedding customs. Others talk about the foolishness of the ones who were not prepare with enough oil for their lamps. Some wonder why the five who had enough did not have the grace to share. It seems to me that one could go on any of those tangents and likely be correct in doing so.

This parable, the one before it, and the two that come after it in the Gospel of Matthew, are really tough ones. There appears to be little room for grace and there is a whole lot of judgement. And one would think that there is no room for error or you miss out. Depending on which parable of the four you are looking at, judgement is the outcome. In one parable the disobedient one is cut in two, in this one the door is shut and the bridegroom doesn't open the door saying "I don't know you." In the next one the useless slave is thrown outside in the dark where people weep and grind their teeth, and in the last of the four we have people being separated as sheep and goats where those who are ignoring the needs of others are sent away into everlasting punishment.

If this is the only theology people have it is no wonder they think of God as the old man in the sky who judges and punishes people. There is no room for error, there is no forgiveness, and there is no grace. Not only that, everything is about going to heaven and not at all about how we live out each of our days in the present.

Good thing we get to put this in the context of a bigger picture and story of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. We are only three weeks out from the first Sunday of Advent where we celebrate the hope, peace, joy, and love of God who sent his Son to be God with us. So, whatever you hear today, hear it from a place of grace, of a God who loves so deeply, who cares so much that God made a way for us to be in close relationship with Godself through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hear it also from the lens of the One who says in this same Gospel of Matthew at chapter 7 verses 7 and 8, "**7** "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."[1]

With those thoughts in our minds, we approach these closed doors, the wise and the foolish, and the waiting game for the bridegroom.

N.T. Wright, a New Testament Scholar, encourages us to see these scriptures through the experience of wisdom literature, especially that of the Book of Proverbs. If you were

[1] *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

to turn to those pages in your Bible you would read phrase after phrase speaking about the wise verses the foolish. As Wright puts it, "…this story is rooted in the Jewish tradition of contrasting wisdom and folly – being sensible or being silly."[2]

As we listen to this story of the five young women or girls, the story invites us to decide who we will be. The struggle for me is that at any given moment I can be the well-prepared person or the very unprepared person. I don't believe that any of us is all or nothing, we are a combination of wisdom and foolishness, of wise and silly. What all this is asking is, are we ready for the key moments in our lives? Are we living our lives with Jesus in our sights?

You will note that all the girls showed up to wait for the bridegroom. All of them fell asleep. All of them got up and trimmed their lamps when it was announced that the bridegroom was arriving. In many ways all of them were prepared and to boil this down to preparedness for the coming of Jesus at some unknown day or hours is to simplify the depth of this story.

Again, one could take many paths to what this parable means or is pointing to, but I wonder, given our human ability to get off track, to miss opportunities, to not pay attention, to get so many things wrong, if this could be a call to be alert. You can sleep; you need rest. You can go about your day…but what are you paying attention to? Who are you paying attention to? How are you spending your time? What conversations are you having? Is your life, your words, actions and thoughts centered around God in your life? Are you, waiting, watching and alert for God at work in you and around you?

I ask these questions of you and of myself. So how might one answer them. Of course that will be different for each of us. We will find ourselves with different people and in different situations each with their own possibilities and revelations. However, there is likely some principles that are similar for all of us. One thing that we can all do is ask, "Where is God in this?" Where is God when we wait in anticipation for a birth of a child, for the diagnosis, in the waiting room as surgery is taking place, when our children and grandchildren go to school and come home with stories of how they were treated with cruelty or they witnessed an injustice. Even if they would not be able to necessarily describe those things in those words.

Where is God in our moments of joy and our moments of fear?

I will say to you that God is present in all the moments of our lives. That is God's promise. It doesn't remove us from a situation, good or bad, but we can trust that God rejoices with us and that God is also with those who are suffering. Jesus suffered interrogations, betrayal, pain, and humiliation. Through Jesus' life, God knows our pain and grief but also knows laughter and joy, friendship and kinship. God gets it.

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[2] Wright, N.T. *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2, Chapters 16-28. 20th Anniversary Edition with Study Guide*. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville, Kentucky. Page 95.

I wonder whether a parable like this is a way to tell us that it is imperative to our well-being as a human being to pay attention. Stay attuned to the movement of God. It may not be immediately apparent how God is at work. Sometime it is only upon reflection that we can understand how God was with us and others at any given time or place in our lives. As Jesus says, “Keep awake,” pay attention to God and the work of God, as well as what work we are called to as Christians so that God’s redeeming love and grace is recognizable to this generation and generations to come.

The invitation, but also the caution, or more strongly, the warning, is to live as people who know and understand what it means to be followers of Christ. It is about what it takes to be alert, not because that it what it takes to be loved by God, but because our response to God’s love, care, compassion, and provision is to live everyday in a way that reveals all that we know to be true of God’s presence in our lives, in our church, in our community, country, and in the world as we wait for the fullness of God presence to come.

We live this as people who also know that though this door to the bridegroom appears to be closed, we are also promised that we can knock and the door will be opened to us. We live as prepared and unprepared, and always with the knowledge of God’s abundant outpouring of love for us in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of all the ages past, hope of years to come,
we gather in this season of remembrance, grateful that you hold each one of us in your memory and your mystery now and for all time. Today we remember all those who have served to preserve justice and freedom in the wars of the last century, in conflicts of our own generation and in peace keeping and relief efforts around the world, thinking especially of those who have died and those who carry scars on body and soul. We remember their courage and we remember their families who still ache for lives surrendered at great cost.

Today we remember the victims of conflict, hiding in forgotten corners of the world, longing for safety and peace, and those seeking refuge among us. We remember victims of violence in our own country, still fearful and uncertain about the future. Help us remember to speak out for their protection and recovery.

Today we remember all those around us who struggle to remember day by day; those who must cope with the fear of forgetting those who matter most to them and with the fear of being forgotten. Help us remember to reach out in comfort and support so no one is forgotten.

Today we remember all those around us who carry on under the burden of sad and hard memories; those weighed down by grief or disappointment, by anger, pain and loss. Help us remember to offer a listening ear and an understanding heart.

God of all the ages past, hope of years to come, help us remember you day by day. Keep us prepared to lift up the grace and truth of your Gospel, to shine into the harsh and distorted corners of the world so that the world will see we are faithful followers of Jesus, who taught us when we pray together to say:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. All Saints Sunday. November 1, 2026. Year A.

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

Invitation to the Offering

Each week we pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.
Though we do not know exactly what this will look like,
we offer our gifts and talents to God
for the work of the Kingdom here and now,
that it will be known here and everywhere.

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May you be inspired to visit our website at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches and give a financial gift to support the work of this ministry.

Hymn *Christ's is the world* **758**

1. Christ's is the world in which we move;
   Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love;
   Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,
   and Christ is the one who meets us here.

Refrain

To the lost, Christ shows his face;
to the unloved, he gives his embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.

2. Feel for the people we most avoid –
   strange or bereaved or never employed.
   Feel for the women and feel for the men
   who fear that their living is all in vain.

Refrain

3. Feel for the parents who've lost their child,
   feel for the women whom men have defiled,
   feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,
   and feel for the weary who find no rest.

Refrain
To the lost, Christ shows his face;
to the unloved, he gives his embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.

4. Feel for the lives by life confused,
   riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
   feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,
   which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

Refrain

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Benediction

May the God who made us,
the Christ who mends us,
and the Spirit who brings peace and life
bless you and sustain you in every challenge and commitment. Amen.

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