

## **Pentecost 24 – A 11/12/2023**

Today we are celebrating the resources that God has entrusted to us to use in the community. We have heard from three of those ministries. Our Noisy Offering that was taken today goes to support another important ministry and that is our Micro-Food Pantry. These ministries all are in obedience to the command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Unless we are visible in the community, it is difficult for people to see Jesus at work. I want to state that we do not do outreach to gain members. This may be a possible outcome, but not the reason we are called to be present in the community.

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, we have been hearing the Kingdom of Heaven is like.... It is like sharing what God has entrusted to us with those who are in need. While we are waiting, this is what we have been called to do.

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus talks about waiting. He tells a story about 10 bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom. Part of this waiting is being prepared. All 10 bridesmaids have lamps. But five have no oil as they did not think ahead that the bridegroom may be late. He is often late as he sometimes has to finish up the arrangements with the bride's family.

The five with no oil asked the five with oil if they could borrow some and they said no. They suggested that they go and find some themselves. The bridegroom came and the five bridesmaids who had the oil went in, and the doors were shut. When the other five returned, they could not get in as the doors were locked.

One could easily interpret this passage to say that this is an end time message that if you are not ready you won't get into heaven. For us the good news is that Jesus has done the work for us to get into heaven. We are asked to acknowledge this in the way that we live our lives.

Jesus is challenging his disciples to be ready and that includes you and me. The ten bridesmaids could represent the church and being exhorted to do good works. This is only on the surface level. We could easily say that we are doing good works, thus we are ready.

I believe that we would be too easy. O Wesley Allen, Jr, in his commentary suggests that we ask the question, "In what ways are we not prepared to meet Christ ever anew?" as opposed to simply, "Are you ready?"

This is what we are called to ask especially during this time of transition. I believe to experience Jesus anew means change. Doing the same things over and over again doesn't challenge us to stay awake. Our leadership has looked at the

system we have in place in which to do our ministry here. It is only the beginning. A report on this conversation will be in our December newsletter.

It has been said that the church is often 10 years behind the world around us. I don't believe that is where we are. Because we choose to share the Gospel in a way that welcomes and affirms all, we think and do things differently. But we need to have a plan in which to do this on a broader basis so that people in the community know this. This is where we can meet Christ anew.

Today we can celebrate the opportunities that God gives us to share the resources entrusted to us. This is what Jesus continues to challenge us to do as part of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are also challenged in our Gospel lesson to discover other ways to do this, that others may know of Jesus' love for them in order to meet Christ in new ways.

In order for us to do this, we are challenged to ask ourselves the question "In what ways are we not prepared to discover Christ anew over and over again?"