St. John's Lutheran Church

PREPARING FOR SUNDAY · 24TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST · PROPER 27, YEAR A

Keep Awake

Matthew 25:1–13 · The Ten Bridesmaids

READ

Read the whole parable slowly, aloud if you can: Matthew 25:1–13. Then sit with these closing words:

> *"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."* Matthew 25:13

Reflection

All ten bridesmaids fall asleep. That is easy to miss. The wise ones are not the ones who stayed awake; they are the ones who came with enough oil for a long night.

The bridegroom is late, and the story is honest about it. Waiting is hard on a lamp. Ministry is hard on a lamp, too. The long meetings, the quiet Sundays, the work that shows no results, all of it *draws down the oil.*

So the question for this week is not "Am I watching hard enough?" It is **"What keeps my lamp lit?"** Prayer, Scripture, worship, Holy Communion, and a few people who tell the truth about how we are really doing. Oil cannot be borrowed at midnight. It is stored up in ordinary days.

THEOLOGIAN VOICES

Luther: In *The Freedom of a Christian*, Luther pictures Christ as the bridegroom and the believer as the bride. Christ takes our sin and gives us his righteousness, the "happy exchange." The oil is not our achievement. It is faith, and faith is itself his gift.

Robert Capon: Capon, the Episcopal priest and writer, reads the parables of judgment as parables of grace. Notice that all ten sleep, and the party still comes. The bridegroom is not looking for the best watchers; he comes for the whole sleeping lot, wise and foolish alike. The hard door at the end is real, but the story's weight falls on his arrival.

CLOSE TO HOME

What keeps our lamp lit at St. John's?

281 years of ordinary faithfulness: the Thursday quilters, the Sunday table, the people who call and visit.

1. Where am I running low on oil this week?
2. Who is one person who helps keep my faith lit? Tell them.
3. What is one ordinary practice I can add before Sunday?

Prayer

Faithful God, you come to us in the night and in the morning. Fill our lamps with your Spirit, and keep us awake to your presence. Wake us, trim us, and send us to Sunday ready to meet you at the Table. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The mission of St. John's is to share God's love through revitalization, community, and outreach.