

The Bridesmaids
Matthew 25:1-13

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

A group of skydivers were preparing a fancy jump for a movie. The scene in the movie called for thirty jumpers to jump together, form up in one big circle and then break into three smaller circles. As any good skydiving team does, they practiced on the ground first, each jumper knowing exactly where to be where to turn, how to link up. The Cameraman sizing up the shoot and knowing where he had to be to get the right shot. Finally the day of the big jump came. Everything was ready, the sky was perfect, the thirty jumpers all had on their colorful suits, goggles and parachutes. The camera man adjusted the camera and made sure all the electronics were ready for the jump. As the plane approached the jump site, the jumpers all stood and filed out the door of the plane along with the camera man and his camera. The director on the ground watched from a remote location the scene from his monitor, he saw the thirty jumpers link up just as they had practiced. It was perfect. They broke into their three groups exactly as they were to do, spinning in mid air, readjusting themselves. Everything was great, the tape of the movie was showing everything. Then as the routine was over, the camera man caught the jumpers, one after another pulling their rip cord and their chutes opening, jerking them up into the safety of the slow descent. After the film showed the last jumper pulling the rip cord, the director saw the camera jerk and spin and go out of control, everything went berserk. Up to that point the film was perfect, but now they knew the one thing they didn't plan for. The cameramen had jumped out of the plan to film the expert skydivers and prepared his equipment well but had forgotten to put on his own parachute. Up until he went to pull his own cord, he had enjoyed himself, absorbed in what he was doing, he filmed the scene for the movie perfectly. But tragically, he was unprepared for the jump. It did not matter how many times he had done it before or what skill he had. By forgetting the parachute he made a foolish and deadly mistake. Nothing could save him, because his faith was in a parachute which he had never taken the trouble to buckle on.

It is a story not unlike the parable which Jesus told about the foolish bridesmaids forgetting to bring something very important and necessary. He was not ready. He was unprepared. It would do no good to try and borrow a parachute of someone else on their way to meet the ground. He was not prepared and he had passed the point of no return.

This story and the story Jesus told us reminds us of several things. First off you have to be prepared. Just as the Bridesmaids had to prepared for a possible long wait and the jumping

cameraman must be prepared with his own chute, following the way of Christ means we have to be prepared.

To often we try to live as though there is no tomorrow. Charge it today, don't worry about tomorrow. Get it now don't worry. Do this, go there, take time to work, sports, sleep in, God knows I am busy, heaven can wait, Sunday worship will be there again next week, there is no rush. But Jesus is telling us we can't wait until later, we need to be active in our faith journeys now. Being ready means actively living in faithfulness to God by developing that relationship with the Lord through worshipping regularly in communion, that being the community, with other believers so that we can learn, sing, pray and have fellowship together growing in our devotion. We are called to deepening our faith journey through witnessing and serving throughout our lives in the church and outside the church in our homes, in our neighborhoods, at our places of work, at school, as we drive and someone cuts us off, as we stand in line and someone jumps in front of us, wherever we go and wherever we are we are to be about doing the work of our faith, NOW, not tomorrow or next week or at the last minute, but be ready now.

This spiritual readiness, preparation and growth does not just happen. It comes as a result of intentional habits of faith, not a here and there attitude that seems to be the faith of many in the world today. It is interesting that in the parable the bridesmaids, they all appeared to be alike. They all thought of themselves as bridesmaids. They all dressed alike. They were all expecting the bridegroom. When the bridegroom was delayed they all fell asleep. They all had lamps. All of them trimmed their lamps. They all wanted to be a part of the wedding feast. But not all of them were prepared. Many people are good people, many people say they are Christian, many believe and yet when it comes to the moment for them to live out that faith, many are unprepared. It is possible to know about Christ and not know Christ. It is possible to know the Holy Scripture and yet not live the Holy Scripture. It is possible to be a nice person and know all the right doctrine, yet have no love with God and God's creation. It is possible to look like everyone else, and have your Christianity on the surface, while never allowing it to penetrate who you are and change the way you live. Don't fail to be prepared. Don't neglect to have oil in your lamp, the faith and relationship with God as you live your life.

And it is your life, I can't do it for you, your spouse can't do it for you, your children or parents can't have it for you. No one can wear a parachute in your place. Faith doesn't work that way either, you can't borrow it from someone else. You need your own. The foolish bridesmaids saw that they did not have enough oil, and they asked their wise friends to loan them some of theirs, but that was not possible. This means that another person's faith will not cover you. Just

because you grew up in a Christian home or you are a member of a church with faithful members it does not necessarily mean that you are living in faith.

In baptism God gives us the power of the spirit, to fill us and guide our faith journeys. Jesus himself came into the world to take upon himself our sins and afflictions and receive the punishment for us. And yet even as we believe this, we know also that the gift of grace, the faith, the love of God still has to be received and used. And free gift that you never take hold of and open is an unused gift. It is there but not very effective.

In the story, the foolish bridesmaids did not realize their need of oil until the bridegroom appeared. They were told to go out and buy oil, but they found that impossible. This means that a relationship with God cannot be bought at the last minute at any price. There are many who still think they can. They wait until that moment of crisis, sickness, even running that yellow light, then in those situations suddenly people remember to turn to God in prayer expecting God to act. But Jesus tells us to keep awake, be ready. Don't reach for that parachutes rip chord after you jumped out of the plane to find out it is not there.

If you wait until then you will realize there is a time when it is "Too Late." We don't always care to think much about that coming day. But it is part of the gospel story, a day of reckoning, a day of judgement, a day when the bridegroom will come and call all people into the eternal house and for all those who do not enter, well... The foolish bridesmaids cried for the door to be opened to them, but their cries were insincere, for even though they said they wanted in, they never made preparation to enter. Their preparation would have been the proof of their true desire. We are to live in constant expectation, because there is coming a day when the future will be a thing of the past — don't ignore the warning.

Be prepared spiritual for the life of faith, be in a close relationship with God, build that love between yourself and God so that your faith can grow and flourish, don't wait until it is too late. "Keep awake therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour." Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.