

PREPARING AT HOME

November 6-12, 2017

Focus reading: Matthew 25:1–13 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=375348743>).

Other lectionary readings: Joshua 24:1–3a, 14–25; Psalm 78:1–7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Theme: Be Ready

This week we continue reading a portion of the “judgment speech” that Jesus shared with his followers. This portion deals with the coming judgment. Scholars are divided over whether this story should be read as a parable (leading the hearer to an unexpected truth about the Kingdom of God) or an allegory (offering characters and events that have very particular symbolic meanings). The story conveys the importance of preparedness, even when the event for which one is preparing is delayed. Each of the ten bridesmaids falls asleep while waiting for the bridegroom. By the time the groom arrives, the bridesmaids’ lamps have gone out. Five of the bridesmaids are prepared with a supply of oil, while the remaining five have nothing to refill their lamps. Since the “wise” bridesmaids refuse to share their oil, the “foolish” bridesmaids need to go to town in search of oil, thereby missing the banquet. When the shoppers return, the bridegroom will not let them into the celebration, saying he does not know them.

According to Jewish tradition, oil stands for good deeds or acts of righteousness. An allegorical interpretation of the story would suggest that good deeds or righteousness cannot be shared or borrowed. According to this interpretation, this is not a story about preparedness but rather about putting faith into action each and every moment. While we wait for the fulfillment of God’s realm, we are each responsible to show God’s activity in our words and actions.

PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION

How can we prepare for the fullness of God’s realm? How can we share God’s light in the world? Play a game of charades, with each person acting out a wise “good deed” while others try to guess what it is.

WISE ONES

The five bridesmaids who have brought extra oil are described as “wise”, while the five who run out of oil are called “foolish.” Do you know someone who is wise and lives in God’s way? Name some of these people, whether they are people you know personally or famous people, living or not.

PRAYER

God of wisdom,
make us wise.

Forgive us when we depend upon others to do the right thing for us
rather than doing our part.

We want to serve you.

Help us to live faithful lives each and every moment.

Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org