Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 24th Sunday After Pentecost - November 8 , 2026

00:15
As we gather to worship today, a couple of things. I'm just first glad that we

00:21
can be together. The next thing is to call attention to the front of the

00:28
worship space. Thank you for those who prepared it and I see lots of poppies

00:32
being worn today as we anticipate Remembrance Day. My poppy is at home. I'm

00:44
"Prepared?" Guess what we're talking about today. So it's sort of like preacher listen to your words.

00:50
But for the next several weeks now we are going to be in our gospel readings, hearing Jesus speak about

01:00
final days and what it means to be prepared particularly as church. What does that mean for

01:06
us to be people who are living out our faith in action. So that trend or that

01:16
trajectory, if I can use that word, will carry us from now well into the Advent

01:22
season.

01:26
I don't think it's the Holy Spirit prompting me to do this. I think this

01:30
next thing is just my own cussiveness. But you've seen the Far Side cartoon

01:34
where Noah is piloting the Ark off into the distance and a unicorn and a

01:41
dinosaur are standing on the shore as the boat leaves and the dinosaur says

01:46
"That was today?"

01:53
sometimes we are caught unaware.

01:59
And our call is to be maybe more aware, so that's what we'll be about today.

02:11
[Music]

02:31
The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 25th chapter.

02:39
Jesus said to the disciples, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this."

02:46
Ten young women took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them

02:51
were foolish and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps they took

02:57
oil with them. But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was

03:04
delayed, all became drowsy and slapped. But at midnight there was a shout, "Look, here

03:11
is the bridegroom. Come to meet him." Then all those young women got up and trimmed their

03:17

lamps. The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil because our lamps are

03:24
going out. But the wise replied, "No, there will be not enough for you and for us. You

03:30
would better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they went to buy

03:37
it, the bridegroom came and all those who were ready went with him into the wedding

03:42
banquet and the door was shut. Later, the other young women came also saying, "Lord,

03:49
open to us but he replied truly I tell you I don't know you keep awake therefore

03:58
for you know neither the day nor the hour the gospel of our Lord

04:07
won't you be seated

The Sermon

04:18
Grace and peace to you from the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

04:30
A word nerd moment if I may. You know what the word crisis, where that comes

04:36
from? It comes from the same word as cross, like a crossroads or a turning

04:43
point? Cruces, if you want the Latin. The people who receive Matthew's gospel are

04:51

in crisis, as are the people to whom the prophet Amos vents his spleen. People in

04:59
crisis at a turning point. And Jesus himself, in his story, starts to speak

05:08
much more urgently about the end bowl things because he knows his life is

05:14
nearly over that the religious and civic authorities are coming after him and so

05:20
he does what people often do when they know the time is short. They say what

05:26
needs to be said and probably with a lot more urgency than even before. As I was

05:35
speaking about the next few weeks we'll have together, it's almost like that

05:40
professor, a professor Randy Pausch who did the last lectures because he was

05:45
dying of Lou Gehrig's disease, where he thought there are things he needed to

05:50
say and people needed to hear and he was very forthright and now I understand

05:56
those lectures are both in a documentary movie as well as a book. Think of Jesus

06:03
in a similar situation saying there are things that need to be said and as far

06:08
as Matthew is concerned these are things that need to be said to the church.

06:14
That brings us to the parable and it's one of a chain of parables we're going

06:19
to hear more as the weeks unfold that have that main character the bridegroom

06:26
not even there until the last minute and then everybody is caught off-guard and

06:31
and not sure just how to respond then.

06:37
That's a crisis. That's a turning point, yes.

06:44
The parable itself, it's weird, isn't it?

06:51
It's kind of a tall tale when you think about it.

06:54
I mean, how many lamp oil dealers do you know who stay open after midnight?

06:59
How many wedding parties are there that happen in the middle of the night?

07:07
But that's really not the point to pick apart the wedding customs of

07:13
a Mediterranean culture in Jesus' day, but there is a hint in here that I think we could pay attention to.

07:20
That is that this particular wedding feast was not the one

07:25
that maybe we think about. That had probably already happened in a long series of feasts,

07:30
but this particular gathering was about a couple already married,

07:36
living that reality. And the last celebration is when

07:41
people

07:42
gather at the family home to be with the newly married couple to say, "Yes, this is the beginning of your life together."

07:51
reality that you've made by covenant and now something that you make real by

07:57
living together.

08:02
In some ways, this is what Jesus is saying, is that we live into a reality

08:11
that already is. It's in our forgetfulness that the lamps don't get oil.

08:19
By the way, those lamps wouldn't have helped anybody anyway. They don't produce very many lumens at all.

08:25
People would have carried torches, again, a bit of a tall tale, I reckon, but the point of it is the preparedness or the awareness, maybe,

08:37
of being who we are already and living that out in consequence.

08:45
I think many of us here have experience of being married people. The ceremony and

08:53
the rings and the beauty of the day, those are public acts and words spoken.

09:02
But the yeses that we speak on that day are the beginning of a lot of other

09:08
Yeses. Large, small, some painful, some not so glamorous, but it's just the stuff you

09:17
do. It's Friday, the men's need to go to the curb. This is what people do when they

09:21
live together. They make sure that the men's get to the curb. And I know as I'm

09:27
looking among us here, those promises of things like, "I will be there for you in

09:33
in sickness and in health, plenty and want, we still say that.

09:40
And it is the doing that makes the marriage, yes?

09:47
It's kind of like these bridesmaids.

09:52
They're already in.

09:53
They're invited.

09:56
But once they get there, they kind of

09:59
live as if they weren't invited.

10:02
And then a wedding would come as a shock to them.

10:07
Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians these words,

10:11
as you have received Christ as your Lord,

10:13
you continue to literally walk around in him.

10:18
This is a way of saying that the lived reality

10:22

sometimes needs to be remembered.

10:24
And with Matthew's audience being the church,

10:28
he reminds us of what Jesus says

10:30
about living into the reality that God has already declared.

10:36
But we forget.

10:39
I think it was something in the way you read

10:41
this morning, Marilyn, that hit me just a little bit

10:46
differently as you read from the prophet Amos

10:49
about those solemn assemblies and the big grand celebrations.

10:54
But there was something missing.

10:56
And so I'm going to go with a very shop warrant,

10:59
But I think apt way of thinking about community.

11:02
So I'm going to rearrange a little furniture

11:04
and I'll try to put it back in its proper place.

11:20
You notice this pedestal has three legs, right?

11:28
Years ago, I forget the person's name, a pastor who gave this thought said this is how communities

11:36
like ours and the church itself functions and the people of Amos's time function. There's

11:43
continuity here. Three legs, balance. What happens if I asked Norm to get out his saws

11:53
all and knock a couple of these off and then we put it back. That's what happened

11:59
to Amos's people. This worship leg, oh it sounds like they had that pretty well

12:06
down pat, but the other two, they weren't as attended to. So think about the three

12:16
legs like this, that one in a church community, a faith community, is the

12:21
life of worship, of praising God. The second is righteousness, which I again

12:29
need a word nerd moment. Righteousness is not like behaving yourself and you know

12:35
eating enough dietary fiber and drinking all the water you're supposed to drink

12:38
a day. It is the relationships, it's right relationships. And the third is

12:45
compassion. That's what was missing for the people in Amos's community.

12:53
And so Jesus in his parables of urgency, Matthew in reporting them, Amos is the prophet, they're

13:02
all leading us to the same place.

13:06
What is it to be living a life of faith?

13:11
A faith in action?

13:17
Maybe there are specifics that we can think about.

13:24
I'll try to put this back roughly where you had it.

13:26
You had it so nice.

13:44
We might think about those three legs as our way of having oil in the lamp or keeping awake

13:50
or keeping vigilant.

13:53
That we're paying attention to things like our worship life together.

13:57
There's a committee meeting after the service to talk about that.

14:00
How are we reverent?

14:01
How are we hospitable?

14:04
Bright relationships.

14:08
This congregation in particular.

14:12
if I may pat you on the back just a little bit,

14:16
has done some stuff that's not particularly glamorous

14:19
but was really important

14:20
because we have had some conflicts in the past.

14:25
And our leadership here said,

14:26
well, there are ways for us to navigate conflict,

14:30
which is inevitable, but to do it in constructive ways.

14:35
And so the council and the leaders

14:39
have spent a lot of time thinking through our process

14:42
of how we make decisions and how we present those

14:45
to all of us.

14:49
This is not glamorous or fun probably,

14:51
but I'm looking at people who are reviewing

14:53
our church constitution for both the congregation

14:57

and the endowment committee.

15:00
Like I said, not glamorous,

15:02
but I think that's a way of keeping awake,

15:03
of attending to those right relationships.

15:08
And I hear frequently about, well,

15:10
There's a misunderstanding. Somebody reaches out, somebody checks, somebody calls.

15:16
Okay?

15:18
I think those are ways of staying awake.

15:22
That I see evidence of oil in the lamp here.

15:26
And let's talk compassion, shall we?

15:30
There is a committee that gives generously on an annual basis and collects on an annual basis.

15:37
Many of you put food out for the food drive yesterday. Some of you do things

15:42
that maybe the rest of us don't even know you do, that are generous, that are

15:47
merciful, that are designed to help other people.

15:56

And maybe your sphere of kindness is not the world, maybe it's at home. Same thing,

16:05
right? Those acts of kindness, of that steadfastness,

16:18
I think that could fall under that part of our community of compassion. What does

16:28
What does it mean to stay awake?

16:33
Well, maybe we have a sense of that now.

16:42
I think I would like to go back to maybe what drives this.

16:49
And that is remembering and paying attention

16:55
to who and whose we are.

16:58
Now it's true that the scriptures were reading pertain to the end of all things, but how

17:04
do we deal with that?

17:08
I think we deal with that by being who we've always been and being faithful to the one

17:14
who's always been faithful to us.

17:18
So I'm not sure that you need a preacher to harangue about, "You need to shape up and

17:24
change and I think it's just remembering the stuff and the ways of being that you

already do

17:35
and just playing that up as best you can. I'll conclude with a story and maybe this is helpful.

17:43
I used to visit a man named Alec. He was well into his 80s and he was very wise. He was a rancher

17:53
and raised a family.

17:55
But he told this story about the end times

17:58
that when he was a kid, there was a solar eclipse

18:02
that was coming.

18:05
And people in his part of where I grew up, out west,

18:12
they were on about, oh, this means that God is coming back

18:15
and plans to punish, and it's gonna be bad,

18:19
so you just better buckle up.

18:23
So bear in mind this story is probably more than 100 years old.

18:31
Alec said he remembered kids in his school crying because they were afraid at the end.

18:36
They were afraid of the bad things that were going to happen.

18:41
Well Alec loved to play marbles and so he told his friends.

18:48
He said, "Well, when the eclipse comes, and it was going to happen during the school day,

18:53
I'm going out in the schoolyard.

18:55
I'm going to take the string like we always do.

18:58
I'm going to make the ring.

19:00
I've got my marbles, and if there is enough light for us to play, I want to play."

19:16
I think this whole preacher wants to tell you that God brings the light, and there is

19:22
always enough light, whether we remember the oil for the lamp or whether we don't, but

19:29
there is always enough light from God's love.

Amen