

Sermon for November 9th, 2014

Twenty Second Sunday of Pentecost, Matthew 25:1-13

Blessings and peace to you from God the Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Each November we celebrate Boy Scout Sunday. We acknowledge the longstanding affiliation that **Eden** has had with the Boy Scouts of America. Summer told me the other night that even though Troop 8 has been a part of our church since the 1950's we did have **another** troop here before that. So **actually**, we have had a relationship with the Boy Scouts since the 1930's. Something else for us to be thankful for is that there have been a number of **Eagle** Scouts that have come out of this troop. **Thanks** be to God **Troop 8** has been a blessing and a positive outreach for our congregation.

Today, some of the boys of Troop 8 are assisting us in our worship service by being greeters, lectors, ushers, and helping out at communion time. We **also** had the Boy Scout Color Guard which is something we have not done in a couple of years. It seemed **quite fitting** to have given the fact that Veteran's Day is next week.

As I was **reflecting** on the Boy Scouts, on the **basic tenants** of who they are as an organization, and how their **experience, learning, and leadership skills** form the lives of the boys, I got to thinking about their motto, ***“Be Prepared”***.

Being prepared, that is something which might serve us all well to remember as there are many times in our lives when being prepared can come in handy as the alternative of not being prepared can prove costly.

In our **gospel** reading for this morning we heard Jesus tell a parable about preparation and/or the lack of it. The reading from today is the second in a series of four **distinctly** Matthean parables all of which are about the relationship between the **return** of Jesus and the **final sorting out** of who will be a part of the heavenly kingdom and who will not.

Today's reading is one that can arouse our discomfort as I do not know about you—but **many times** I have been the one who has **not been prepared** when the time for action comes. Is **that** how it works? That one apparently arbitrary decision marks the **line** between inclusion and exclusion from the '**ultimate**' celebration in heaven? Somehow that just does not seem like the gospel message.

Here are a few facts about weddings at the time of Jesus. They were **great** occasions of dancing and partying, there was **much** food and drink, and they were extended **weeklong** celebrations. They traditionally included the **whole** community and **everyone** became involved in the festivities. The wedding would **begin** at night. The bride and her close friends would **wait** at her family home until the bridegroom came to **take** her to the place that would be their home. The

bridesmaids had to plan ahead and be ready with their lamps whenever the groom **finally** came because often times he would be late. When the groom arrived at the bride's house he would **ask** to see her. When she came out he would lift her veil and proclaim his joy at seeing her. Then the **whole** wedding procession would go through the streets and on to the wedding banquet.

Let's look **closely** at our text and notice just how much alike these 10 bridesmaids were as when all is said and done there becomes a rather **significant** difference between them. They all responded to the **call** of the bride to serve in the wedding celebration. They all showed up. They all had their lamps. They even though some took no oil with them. (Total **lack of preparation** on their part.) Even as the bridegroom was delayed they all **grew weary** from their work of keeping watch. They all **slept**. And when the bridegroom came at **midnight** there was a shout, "*Look! Here is the bridegroom. Come out to meet him.*" The time had come that they had **all** been waiting for. The wicks were trimmed. The preparations had been made ready!!

The **difference** between the 10 was that the 5 wise bridesmaids put their time of preparation for the celebration to good use—to gather some **extra oil** just in case the unexpected happened. They were **prepared** for any delay. The other 5 foolish bridesmaids did not prepare quite so well. They must have thought that by **asking** the others for some of their oil they would have shared. After all, it **was**

midnight by the time the groom came. There was not a 7/11 or all night market open for them to go and purchase more oil. Come on, can't you just give us some of **your** oil? Alas, in their lack of preparation the 5 **miss out** on the celebration, the door was shut. They **even** cried out, "*Lord, lord.*" But there was **no** getting in. The bridegroom's reply was, "*Truly, I tell you. I do not know you.*" **Who** wants to hear that?

Perhaps you may think that the answer of, "No." might have been sort of a **harsh** response on the part of the wise bridesmaids. After all it **was** a celebration. How about **sharing** a little bit? But there are **just** some things we cannot share. We need to **prepare** on our own. Each of us has to be responsible for ourselves when it comes to our **spiritual** life and **that** is what Jesus was talking about here—about being prepared when He returns. There will be **no time** for getting ready then. When the heavenly bridegroom comes either you will be prepared/or you won't. It is just as **simple** as that.

The point of this parable for us here today is that **living and waiting expectantly and hopefully** in Christian hope rests on the **trust and promise** that the God who created the world will continue to **love** the world, He will continue to **redeem and save** the world by coming into it with **love and grace** until Jesus comes again. But that does not mean that we do not need to do our part to be **ready** when the time comes.

So let me ask you “*are you prepared?*” **No one** can do the preparation for us. We have **all** been given a task as Christians. The task to build our life with God is up to **each** of us. The task to build our faith in Jesus is up to **each** of us. Are we taking on the ‘*oil*’ available here at church—are we **learning** more about God’s Word, are we **growing** in our prayer and spiritual life, are we **rolling up** our collective sleeves and **working** for God’s kingdom which is always coming in new and various ways, and do we **understand** what it means to love others as we love ourselves? It is up to **each** of us. No one can **prepare** the journey for us.

What task does God have for you? For **all** of us? What does God want us to do so we are **prepared** when the time comes? **Not only** does God give us tasks to **perform** he gives us the resources and the time we **need** to prepare. So be **wise**, be **awake**, and be **prepared** for the bridegroom as we want to be **ready** to enter into the great celebration when the **time** comes because we know neither the day nor the hour that this will happen. **AMEN**