

32nd Sunday – A – 2017
Nov. 12, 2017
Holy Spirit (HG)

Wis 6:12-16
I Thess 4:13-18
Matt 25:1-13

I. You know how each of us complains about “other people” who are using their cell phones at inappropriate times?!

- as in at a social function and instead of engaging in the conversation and activities, they are on the sides or in a corner, texting, talking, playing a game?
- or most especially while driving? They’re either talking or, worse, texting while driving. Their attention is drawn to the phone and not the responsibility of driving. Thus they jeopardize their own safety and the safety of passengers and other people on the road. They are not really attentive to the task at hand.
- a safe driver needs to be focused: minimizing distractions, whether that means a phone, music, cup of coffee or whatever... For safety, a good driver needs to be watchful for the unexpected...a deer dashing out of the ditch, a child running across the street, a pedestrian dressed in dark clothing, a car door suddenly opening. A driver needs to be awake and watchful – not drowsy, sleepy, pre-occupied with other concerns.
- in other words, safe drivers are vigilant, they are ready for the unexpected

II. This is the type of vigilance Jesus is teaching in the parable.

It’s the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: the wise virgins were ready for the bridegroom: they had done their due diligence, they had brought flasks of oil with their lamps, so that if they ran short, they would be ready with more oil.

The foolish ones had not brought a supply of oil. When the bridegroom came, they were not ready.

III. In our everyday lives we may be ready – or we may not be ready.

If you are hosting Thanksgiving dinner... how do you do that?

If you are the kind of person who wants to be ready, you are probably already planning your menu: buying ingredients, looking for a special on a turkey, deciding who is going to bring what.

Or you may be the kind of person who waits until the last minute: running to shop the day before, cleaning the house the night before, trying to remember how to prepare a turkey and so on!

Obviously, the wise approach is to prepare – to plan ahead – to get things organized – be ready for the feast! This can be applied to so many things in life: preparing a meal, studying for an exam, taking classes for a degree, priming for a job interview, planting a garden....do we live life in readiness? Or are we a last minute person?

IV. Being ready for the big feast at the end of life means living the Christian life on a daily basis.

Why were the foolish virgins foolish? In Matthew's gospel we heard back in chapter 7 that foolish people are the ones who hear Jesus' words but don't bother to act on them. "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

Practice makes perfect, or in this case, practice makes us ready for the end times. Living as a disciple of Jesus means practicing – doing – this everyday. It's a growing process.

We may not always be the most moral person, we may stumble and fall, but, with practice, we get better. Overcoming temptation and sin, growing in the virtues, deepening our prayer life, becoming more responsible...are all skills, abilities, qualities which improve over time.

It's like learning a language: we can't learn a new language in a matter of days or weeks. It takes persistent, regular practice over many months, even years, practicing, learning and experiencing the language.

So it is with the Christian life: it takes time over the long haul. But when we do, we live in a state of readiness: we are always ready for the Lord's coming, whenever that may be.

V. There is a wonderful British poem which reminds us of the importance of responding to God's grace. It is "The Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thompson.

It begins:

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;

And shot, precipitated, Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.”

The Hound of heaven, of course, is God – God who is always pursuing us, always offering us his grace. It is a grace offered, but not forced.

The wisdom of life teaches us the importance of responding to the gift. As a youth, we may not have such wisdom. We may be too preoccupied with the distractions of life. We may tell ourselves we have plenty of time to prepare for death and the Lord’s coming into my life. We are not focused on what is most important.

But, hopefully, wisdom builds as we accumulate life experience. We learn that so many things that seemed important at one time, are really not of highest priority. Living a life of virtue and holiness on a daily basis is what prepares us for the bridegroom’s coming.

VI. May we have such wisdom, so that when the Lord comes, we will be ready and enter the feast!

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