



Today we have before us “The Parable of the 10 Virgins.” Or as some people call it: “The Wise and Foolish Virgins” or “The Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids” or “The Parable of the 10 Maidens” or “The Parable of the 10 Handmaidens...” Obviously, Bible scholars have struggled with how to name this one.

This is true, in part, because the women are referred to in the Greek New Testament by the word *παρθένοις*. This is the same word used in Matthew 1, referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Its primary meaning is an unmarried female young adult — having more to do with age and maturity than anything else.



But honestly, this parable really isn't about the ten young women.

Or about the fact that half of them are wise and half are foolish.

It isn't about preparing for an oil shortage.

It isn't about the foolish women being out of luck,

Or the wise women being unwilling to share with them.

It isn't about the fact that some of them got into the banquet, and some of them were shut out.

It isn't about the bridegroom refusing to recognize the ones who were shut out.

All of these details enrich the story, of course.

It wouldn't be the same without them.

But the key to the story is the delay of the bridegroom.

And the fact that everyone — wise and foolish; prepared and unprepared — had to wait for his arrival.

It is, at the heart of it all, a parable about waiting.



So the question is: how does one wait faithfully?  
 It is not something we are accustomed to doing these days, is it?  
 When 5–7 business days won't do, we pay for expedited shipping.

When I order a CD on amazon.com, I can immediately download the songs I've purchased to iTunes (and I usually do...).

At Disney World, we sign up for FastPass+ so we don't have to spend as much time standing in those extremely long lines.

If you're a regular commuter you can pay for a pass to use the express lanes, and get there much faster.

We are not accustomed to waiting, are we?

We have very little patience for it these days.



In today's Gospel text, however, Jesus calls his followers to wait faithfully.

He is laying the groundwork for his disciples, who will experience his death, resurrection and ascension, and then have to wait before receiving the fullness of his promise.

St. Matthew is remembering this saying because by the time he writes it has been 50 or 60 years since they last saw Jesus.

Many of the original witnesses to the resurrection have died.

They're beginning to wonder just how much longer they will have to wait for him to return.

In fact — some have given up on waiting altogether,

Having concluded he just isn't coming back.

Maybe it was all a great misunderstanding.



Jesus teaches that waiting is central to the faithful life. Faithfulness demands a wakefulness — a mindfulness while we wait.

You and I have been promised that we will see Jesus.

We don't know when this will be, of course.

That's what makes the waiting so difficult.

We might see Jesus repeatedly during the course of life.

We might see Jesus when our earthly life has ended.

We might see Jesus at what the Bible calls, "the end of the ages." We don't know when it will happen, but nonetheless we wait for him.

And today we learn that how we wait is important.

So what does that faithfulness — that mindfulness — that wakefulness — look like, as you and I wait to see Jesus?



For the past few weeks we have been engaged in our annual stewardship appeal here at Saint Peter Lutheran Church. We have lifted up our hope that the new year will bring with it some exciting opportunities for our congregation to be one that is grounded, gracious and generous.

In a couple minutes we'll invite you to make your commitment to support our life together in the year to come.

I do hope you've been thinking and praying about this.

If you are able, I hope you are planning to increase your support of our ministries in this new year.

I truly believe that if we all step up, and give our very best, 2018 is going to be an exciting year for us.

But today I'm also hoping this focus will stir each of us to explore how these same three themes — grounded, gracious and generous — can shape our own faithfulness — and possibly become the ways in which we wait for Christ.



We are hoping that Saint Peter, in the coming year, will be able to grow in its capacity to help participants of all ages be more grounded in the promises that are ours in Christ. But regardless what Saint Peter is able to do, how will you work on this in your own life, and in your own faithfulness? How will you return, regularly, to the promise of your baptism? The promise that God loves you enough to die for you, and assures you that forgiveness and new life are yours? Through daily devotions, regular Bible study, weekly worship, spending time together with other faithful friends, the Spirit will take us to a deeper place of trust. Where there is hope and joy and peace. As our lives are grounded in faith. To do so just might be a faithful way to wait for the coming of Christ.



We are hoping that Saint Peter, in the coming year, will be even more gracious in the ways we invite others to experience our life together. But regardless what Saint Peter is able to do, how will you grow in your commitment to be a light to the world? How will you follow Christ's command to invite others in? How might your words and actions be a sign of what God is doing in this world today? An invitation to experience the faith that has touched us? I'd love to see each of us commit to bringing one new person — or one new family — to worship a couple of times each year. Working together to help them discover how welcome they are here in this place. To do so just might be a faithful way to wait for the coming of Christ.



We are hoping that Saint Peter, in the coming year, will be able to be more generous than we have ever been in our support of the Village Resource Center — as it seeks to be a lifeline to those who are struggling in our neighborhood.

But regardless what Saint Peter is able to do, how will you grow in your own personal generosity?

This has to do with giving money, of course.

It also has to do with how we invest our time, with who we remember in our prayers, with how we support and encourage others, with when and where we share our belongings...

A faithful person is a generous person.

As we remember the generosity God has shown to us, our own generous response becomes an expression of joy and hope.

To do so just might be a faithful way to wait for the coming of Christ.



Grounded, Gracious, Generous.

Three faithful ways to understand what it means to be a Christian congregation.

Three faithful ways to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Three faithful ways to wait for the coming of Christ into our lives.

11



**Take It Home!**

Let's keep the conversation going. Our hosts will have a 7-day devotional guide for you as you leave today.

Question for this evening's conversation: "In what ways can we prepare to welcome Christ into our lives?"



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I hope you'll spend some time in the next few days thinking about this, and talking about this with those who are closest to you.

As you leave today, our hosts have a 7-day devotional guide for you. Let's spend the next couple of days reflecting on this morning, and preparing ourselves for next Sunday.

Beginning with the question: "In what ways can each of us prepare to welcome Christ into our lives?"

It is the faithfulness to which Jesus calls us in this morning's Gospel lesson.

12




**Hymn of the Day**

Please stand as we sing today's Hymn of the Day.

1<sup>st</sup> Service: *When Long Before Time*  
(page #34)

2<sup>nd</sup> Service: *Find Us Ready*  
(page #30)



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13

**Saint Peter**  
LITURGICAL LEADER

**St. Matthew 25:1-13**



25:1 [Jesus said] "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'


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14

**Saint Peter**  
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**St. Matthew 25:1-13**



7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'

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