‘Worship at home’
November 8th 2026



We come to worship a God of love,
who we find in the holy spaces
and the ordinary places of our lives.
Our reading this week encourages us to live with expectation
of God’s presence in our midst.

Opening: adapted from Psalm 78:1–7
Give ear, O people, to God’s teachings,
for in parable and story God’s wisdom is revealed.
Come, let us remember the stories of our ancestors in faith.
Let us share them with our children,
and celebrate the goodness that has come from them.
God has established decrees with our grandparents
and all generations: and God has asked us
to teach and continue them.
Come, people of God, let us raise our hope in God,
and remember our blessings;
let us never forget God’s glorious works in our lives.
Come, let us worship!

SeasonsFUSION Season of Creation • Pentecost 2 2020
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Have you started counting down until Christmas? Already the retail outlets have cleared the last vestiges of Halloween and the shelves are filling with Christmas decorations and candy canes. It is only three weeks until the liturgical season of Advent begins. The Scripture today starts us thinking about Advent, a time of anticipation of the coming of Christ, recalling his coming as a baby, and awaiting the coming of the kingdom of God in all its fullness. It is a time of waiting.

Waiting is an expectant patience. It’s a patience that says, “I don’t know what God is going to do, but I know God is going to do something.” - *Max Lucado*

After Jesus Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, the early Christian community believed that Christ would return again, in their lifetime, ushering in the reign of God for all time. As time went by, they began to wonder if this would ever occur. Sometimes waiting seems to take forever, and we become disheartened and discouraged. We go about our own business and start to forget what we are hoping for. The author of Matthew encouraged the Christian community by reminding them of a story which Jesus had told.

Matthew 25:1-13

At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

New International Version



In our waiting… God is working

How do you respond to this story?

confused unfair confronted despair self-righteous angry undeserving suspicious puzzled fearful something else?

Jesus frequently told stories in parables, sometimes with multiple meanings and often ending with a surprise. They challenge the assumptions of the listener, and often give us more questions than they do answers.

Reflect on <u>some</u> of the following:

- Where do you place yourself in the story? How would you feel if you were a woman who did not have enough oil? A woman who had extra oil? The bride? The bridegroom?
- How might your view change if you substituted the word privileged for wise and the word poor for foolish? What if the women did not have enough money to buy more oil?
- Think about the oil keeping the light in your own life shining. When have you felt your supply has run out? How did you respond? How do you replenish your oil?
- Would you ask someone to share their oil, knowing there will not be enough? If you have just enough for yourself would you share with the others?
- Do you think that the wise bridesmaids were selfish? Are there times when it is wise to keep something for ourselves?
- Who closed the door?
- When have you had a door closed unexpectedly on you? How did that make you feel?
- When have you perhaps closed the door on another, and for what reason? How did that make you feel?
- When has your faith community church closed the door to another? When has your faith community held the door open for another who might have been excluded elsewhere?
- What might we be waiting for in our times? How urgent and pressing are our needs?
- How are we called to wait patiently? How do we prepare ourselves in the waiting? What can we *do* as we wait?

In Jewish tradition, oil is a metaphor for righteousness or good deeds. *(The Jewish Annotated New Testament: NRSV Bible Translation)* For the author of Matthew, it is not a story about being alert or awake; all the bridesmaids fall asleep. It's not about knowing when to be ready. It's about faith in action. It's not possible to give someone else your faith, just as you can't do another person's good deed. This story is a reminder that we each need time to replenish that which keeps us going, to tend to our spirits, establish our priorities, and be sustained and nurtured so we can shine our lamps showing God's love and grace to those around us.



Prayer Loving God, we sometimes tire of waiting.
We get impatient, wanting to see answers to our prayers
and an end to seemingly impossible situations.
But your timing is not our timing, O God.
Teach us to wait.
Teach us to wait patiently,
that in the waiting, we might see you at work.
Remind us that sometimes we don't find you
in the answers and the outcomes,
but in the questions and the surprises.
In the meantime, show us how to
shine our lamps of light and love to those around us.
We pray for those who wait;
for those who are in darkness;
for those who feel the door has been shut on them.
We pray for those who don't have enough,
or find themselves unable to replenish their oil,
physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
We pray for those who make decisions
about the provision of resources, that fairness and justice
and compassion will shine through. Amen!



Closing: This week you are invited to place a candle in a prominent place, to light it each day and spend a few moments replenishing your "oil", that you can shine the light of God's love to others.