Sermon: November 7/8, 2026

Matthew 25: 1-13
Frank Mariano, worship leader

In the days when this parable was presented, weddings celebrations were days long....not like our short weddings today lasting an evening or an afternoon....they knew how to celebrate, and the culmination of the wedding was when the bridegroom arrived, and the 10 virgins or bridesmaids were there to meet him.

Picture the scene....ten bridesmaids are waiting outside a banquet hall, wrapped in heavy coats against the cold. They fell asleep as the bridegroom was late. As they awoke, five of them are completely at peace, their oil lamps are glowing steadily and bright....five of them are in a full-blown panic as their lamps are beginning to flicker and they have no extra oil to refuel their lamps.

So, who are the characters in this parable representing. The bridegroom is Jesus, and we are all waiting for him-even though we do not know when he will come. The bridesmaids are us....all of us. What is the oil....the oil is the sustaining, saving faith in Jeus Christ. That oil can be replenished if it runs low, and we can use it to refill our lamps or it can be depleted as our faith wanes.

Every single one of the bridesmaids, wise and foolish alike fell asleep. Jesus isn't condemning them for getting tired. The bridegroom was delayed.....life happens. The timeline that we expected for God to run on, didn't match reality.

We live in a culture that hates waiting. We want our coffee instantly, we want our news in headlines, and our prayers are answered when we get an almost instant Prime delivery....we love to hear when our Alexis announces, "From Amazon Shopping, your package has arrived".....then we experience great joy. When God delays, panic sets in. We start doubting....where is He....did he hear my prayers, does He still care?

Jesus tells us this parable to inoculate us against spiritual exhaustion-it is that exhaustion that depletes our oil or in our terms....how much of a charge we have in our devices. Jesus is telling us that the night is going to be longer than you think.....don't build your life assuming the dawn is right around the corner. Jesus wants us to be prepared for the "Long Night."

What does the long night feel like:

- It feels like the grief that we feel that will never go away

- It feels like the extended, lingering illness that we see in a loved one
- It feels like the pain we feel when we have a serious illness
- It is the cultural fatigue of watching institutions crumble, divisions deepen, and peace feel out of reach

So what is the deal with the wise not sharing with their foolish companions.....it seems so uncharitable. The wise virgins have oil and are not willing to share. Here Jesus takes the opportunity to share with us another lesson. The oil is our living faith, and each person must have their own. And each one of us has a different level of "Living Faith." We can talk about faith, but we cannot give faith to those around us. Each of us has our own level....you cannot borrow someone else's spiritual stamina.

Think about this in modern terms: we all know what it is to navigate life with a Low Battery. Imagine you are our late, your phone hits 5% charge, the screen dims, and suddenly you are scrambling for Low Power Mode, and you are desperately looking for someone with a charger. The foolish bridesmaids were like someone walking into a long power outage with a 3% battery and no place to recharge and they are blindly assuming that someone else will let them plug in.

This is the crux of the foolish versus the wise. The foolish bridesmaids had the lamps, they had the fancy clothes, they had the invitations, they had everything they needed to succeed, but they did not have any reserve....they assumed that they could just get by not bringing any reserve.

But, when the crisis hits, that's when we discover what kind of battery health we have, that's when we discover the depth of our faith. Dealing with illness, death, heartbreak, disappointment, all the life experiences that challenge our faith.....that is when we need to have a reserve.

And when the foolish ask the wise for oil, the refusal isn't born of selfishness; you cannot fast charge a lifetime of spiritual discipline in five minutes. The things that keep our faith alive and recharge our oil level.....daily communion with God, quiet prayer, acts of mercy....these are the daily habits that build our battery capacity long before the midnight power grid fails.

And finally, we must talk about those chilling words when the door is locked, and the bridesmaids knock, and Jesus comes to the door and says, "I don't know you." Can you imagine what that feels like.

It is easy to listen to this parable and think that Jesus is looking for reasons to keep people out. But look closely at the language and the situation. The bridesmaids knew about the bridegroom (We all know about Jesus).....They were part of the wedding party (We are part of a congregation)....They had lamps, they were dressed for the occasion (We have everything we need to know Jesus) and they stood at the gate (We too, are near to Jesus).

But they did not truly know him, and he did not recognize them.

Knowing God is not about theological trivia or religious performance....it is about an intimate, abiding relationship. It's possible to stand right next to the things of God, to carry the outward symbols of faith, and yet have a completely empty heart.

The door shut not because God is petty, but because relationships cannot be faked at the last minute. Intimacy with Christ is forged in the quiet unglamorous, daily grind of following Him when nobody is watching.

So, what does this mean for us as we start our week? Well, it strikes me that our congregation as a whole needs to be sure that we have the resiliency to keep the charge in our batteries. As we are in the process of finding a new pastor to lead us.....we need to demonstrate that we are keeping our faith alive by supporting each other and by believing that we, as a congregation will be able to thrive as followers of Christ during this period of change and transition.

The bridegroom is coming. The night is dark, yes-but the dawn is real. So let's charge our batteries, find ways to help and to serve, and keep our eyes wide open waiting for the One who makes all things new.

Thanks be to God.