

32nd Sun OT 2020
Matthew 25:1-13

The Ten Bridesmaids

Over the next three Sundays as we approach the end of the Liturgical Year, we read the final section of the *Eschatological Discourse* of Matthew which deals with the **End Times** and its demands. Eschatology is the study of the End of Times in Theology...the **End of the World**, as some people think of it. Cartoons depict it with an old man walking around wearing an oversized sign front and back with the message, the End is Coming.

In Kenya there was the group which was called the **Eschatology Sect**. They would give the day and time of the End of the World and then they would prepare by selling all their things and digging pits in the ground to wait out the End of the World. They became known as the **Mole People**. The day would come and pass and nothing would happen, and so they recalculated and set another date. The Kenya National Paper had a camera man there to catch their reaction as they came up out of their pits on the day after. They always looked disappointed that the world had not come to an end or been destroyed.

Today is the parable of the **Ten Bridesmaids**. The bridegroom represents the returning Christ. Jesus had earlier called himself the bridegroom who would one day be taken away, and his disciples he had called the bridegroom's attendants. The reader would recognize the biblical imagery of God being married to his people. The bridesmaids who coped with the delay by buying sufficient oil, represent Christians who practice a life of responsible discipleship as they wait.

As they wait...**as we wait**, we practice responsible discipleship. In our November 8th, **Give Us This Day**, Booklet, is the reflection after the Sunday's readings, and one part caught my attention, in particular where Paula's friend, Tom—a recovering alcoholic--tells her that he had recently made his first retreat and was so shaken by a revelation he had had, that he didn't know what to do next. And he tells her, "God showed me that just stopping drinking isn't enough." What he'd realized is that **simply being good is only the beginning**. Paula contrasts it to the ten bridesmaids in the Gospel, and writes, "Following the rules is only the first step on

a long journey...one that will require all the love and courage a Christian can muster.”

The Gospel asks us, What is our oil, and do we have enough? What gets us through the long stretch, and is it enough, or does it just get us through the day? Last week I mentioned **ACEDIA**, Spiritual Boredom, which is equivalent to the virgins, wise or foolish, **falling asleep**. And I mentioned that everyone will experience it at one time or another, even the greatest of saints. What is our oil that gets us through those times of spiritual dryness or spiritual boredom, or spiritual sleepiness”? At times do we feel that we have **run out of oil**?

In the article mentioned above from **Give Us This Day**, simply being good or following the rules is just the first step on a long journey, **just the beginning**. Where do we go from here? We need to ask ourselves one simple question, Do we really want a deeper relationship with God? If not, why? There should be more to our relationship with God than just keeping the rules.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, 14:11f, “When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became an adult, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known.” And that is how our relationship with God unfolds, depending on us, a mature adult relationship or as a child. Paul ends his famous passage, “Faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” That is our oil, and that is what will get us through to the next life where our relationship with God will be consummated.

It is time to put away our spiritual childhood attitudes and put on the adult. No one said turning the other cheek would be easy, or practicing tough-love with other, especially our children and loved ones. God does it with us all the time. There is NO easy way. As Scott peck writes on the first page of his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, “Love is Difficult!”