Proper 27 (32) - November 8, 2026

- Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25 - Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-20 - 1 Thess 4:13-18 - Matthew 25:1-13

"Wisdom"

1. Waiting is generally not easy to do, I would say.
    a. A friend of mine, when helping her children have a sense of time as they waited for a good thing, she'd help them count down the days by saying "four more sleeps before we go see grandma"
    b. In ancient times, while they would not have had clocks like what we have, they could keep track of their waiting like that, with the counting of sunsets, or full moons, or the blooming of flowers in Spring
    c. Today we have clocks and other technology to help us keep track of time as we anticipate something which is coming (a countdown clock until retirement, a calendar on our phone to see how long before the last day of school comes)
    d. We have made waiting something which we intentionally try to shorten or at least get distracted while doing the waiting
    e. We maybe call a doctor's office and we find ourselves put on hold. Music is usually playing to make our waiting easier. Though it's tough when you wait so long that the song loops back to the beginning
    f. There are even some places that when you're on hold, they give you a choice of having them call you back without losing your place in the line. That way you can do something else.
    g. We try to be productive as we wait, maybe. A friend who lived in the country kept a novel in her car to read when she got stopped at a train crossing.
    h. We don't like waiting. Maybe it's also we don't like just being in limbo and not DOING something as the clock's hands tick around slowly
    i. And I think waiting becomes uniquely difficult if we have no sense on when the expected event will arrive.
    j. Tracy was sharing an audio book with me on a recent road trip. *The Measur*e, a novel by Nikki Erlick, where people can get to know, if they choose, whether they will have a long or a short life. Maybe not the date of their death, but a general sense of having a long or a short life. Would you want to know that? How would it affect the LIVING of our days? Or would we simply be feeling the ENDING of our lives a little each day?

2. We read in the scriptures that in the decades after Jesus was raised, a very crucial question was in the hearts of the people in churches: when will Jesus return?
    a. This is directly related to the fact that when Jesus was teaching, he spoke about "the end times."
    b. In some instances, these "end times" were a reference to very difficult events which were going to happen and which would affect Jesus' followers.
    c. In the chapter before our Gospel lesson today, Jesus warned the disciples that the temple would be destroyed, and of course they asked him "When!?" but Jesus did not give them a date.
    d. The thing is, some 40 years after he said that to them, Rome brutally quashed a Jewish rebellion in Palestine against the Roman Empire.
    e. This was in the year 70 after Jesus' birth. Rome was fighting the rebellion, laid a siege to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. It was never rebuilt.
    f. And Jesus had said that after that the end would be near, and that he himself would return and that the Realm of God would begin fully.
    g. If you've ever heard of the term "the second coming" it's referring to Jesus returning.
    h. And the people waited and wondered and worried.
3. So that's the context for today's gospel when Jesus tells the disciples a parable about that second coming
    a. Jesus says that the Realm of Heaven would be like these bridesmaids waiting for the groom to come so that the wedding and the party could begin.
    b. It's not clear why the groom was delayed, but some of the women thought it couldn't be that long. The oil in their lamps would be enough.
    c. But the other women thought that they should be ready for a longer wait, so they brought extra oil.
    d. Not only does the groom take long to get there, but when he finally arrives he comes at night, so they needed those lamps!
    e. Thinking about it for a moment, in the dark even a couple of lamps would have been helpful to travel from A to B, but maybe each of the women needed a working lamp because they could not all be bunched up traveling, or perhaps their individual responsibilities would have them needing to move about each taking care of different errands.
    f. The point of the story was to acknowledge the waiting for Jesus to return would be open ended, not sure when he would return. So, waiting had to be done not mindlessly but purposefully. They had to be prepared.
    g. But prepared for what? Prepared to be living like Jesus would have us live.

    h. If you're waiting for that callback, but your phone battery is at 2%, well…
4. This parable about the Realm of Heaven, then, is about waiting wisely.
    a. Our first reading spoke about wisdom, and how the first thing to do was to be open to learning, which leads to loving wisdom, which goes along with behaving as God asks, which brings us to eternal life in God.
    b. To wait wisely is to live by God's priorities.
    c. Not counting down the days for an event, but being so tuned in that we would be always ready.
    d. There are some of our Christian siblings who then say: "Be good, so that when Jesus comes back you're doing the right thing and you get to go to heaven."
    e. While that does try to learn from the parable, I think we can also look at it an additional way way.
    f. There are daily moments when we come face to face with Jesus, as Jesus taught that when we serve those in need, it's like we're serving him.
    g. So then, the waiting is not long this drawn-out thing. The waiting is almost like taking one step after another.
    h. There is no way of knowing when the anticipated return of Jesus will be, but it is certain that we will face opportunities each day to do what Jesus showed us how to do:
        i. to love our neighbor,
        ii. to do good to those who wish us harm,
        iii. to advocate for those no one hears,
        iv. to learn from those no one pays attention to,
        v. to be transformed by God's wisdom
    i. We get to make this imperfect world more like Jesus would have it, with compassion, with a readiness to serve, with a commitment to love God and neighbor.
    j. There will be times when we'll know the time is here:
        i. When there was the flood here in Columbus and you all mobilized to help each other.
        ii. When there is a chance to help a young family welcome their first child home.
        iii. When we can de-escalate a conversation about politics which is getting overheated,
        iv. When we can say a word of encouragement to someone to let them know we see them,

    v. When we can spend time and money volunteering to support someone in jail, or with no stable housing, or food-insecurity, or who lonely and isolated.
5. Following Jesus, even as we wait for him to return, is about waiting with wisdom for the very next moment when we get to share God's love with someone.

https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-32/commentary-on-matthew-251-13-10

Reflection questions

1. Share a story when waiting became particularly difficult for you and why.
2. Read Matthew 25:1-13. Put yourself in the shoes of the women who brought extra oil and those who didn't. How do their different perspectives help you understand the parable in new ways?
3. In our life of faith, what are ways in which we can stay awake and prepared?