

NOVEMBER 8TH – REMEMBRANCE Sunday

DIGITAL PRINT SERVICE: FIRST SACKVILLE PRESBYTERIAN

O Canada

Last Post

Silence

Reveille

In Flanders Fields

Laying of the wreath

Prayer

The Queen

Call to Worship

Leader: Put your oil in your lamp! Keep it burning!

People: **We'll put oil in our lamps today!**

Leader: Salvation's at the door! Greet its coming!

People: **Turn the wick up high and lead the way!**

Prayer of Adoration

Loving God, your kingdom is at hand. It is here, seen dimly, as if in a clouded mirror. In this time of worship help us to take up the cloth and wipe away the mist. Let us, by your grace, behold your kingdom and embrace it with all our hearts, finding strength and comfort in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 624 Blest are They

Prayer of Confession

Unchanging God, we are hard pressed to know what the day of the Lord is, let alone when it may come. Much of life seems to go in circles rather than in a visible direction. Justice seems less like a flowing river and more like a fountain that rises and falls. Forgive us if we are more curious than concerned, more puzzled than prepared for your judgements whenever they come. Prepare us for the day of Christ's coming, in our death or in human history. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: Friends, hear the Good News! Believe that Jesus died and rose again; and so it will be for those who died in Christ.

P: **We believe that Jesus died and rose again; so we will live again in Christ.**

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“Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself.” Mark 12: 29-31

L: Friends, believe the God News!

P: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.**

Mission Capsule – Providing more than medicine

When Devika first noticed something wrong with her leg, she visited her local hospital in Nepal to get it checked out, but after a few years, Devika’s skin problems had gotten worse, not better. After visiting many clinics and traditional healers, Devika still couldn’t find a solution. When she was just about to give up hope, Devika’s friend suggested she visit the Shining Hospital. Supported by Presbyterian World Service & Development, the hospital provides support, treatment and education for people suffering from leprosy. At the hospital, the staff diagnosed Devika’s skin condition, provided the proper medicine and taught her about her condition. Today, Devika is thankful for the support she received!

Hymn 740 *Make me a channel of your peace*

Prayer of Illumination

God, your word is a light for our path. Your word is breath in our stillness. Your word is water to our thirst. Refresh us now, and speak through your word. Amen.

READINGS for November 8 – God speaks through the Scriptures

READING	VERSE
<i>Old Testament</i>	Joshua 24: 1-3, 14-25
<i>Psalms</i>	Psalm 78: 1-7
<i>Epistle</i>	1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 25: 1-13

Hymn 674 *In the bulb there is a flower*

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SERMON:

Our gospel lesson today brings back memories of camp and singing these words: **“Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning, Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising, Give me peace in my heart, keep me resting, Give me love in my heart, keep me serving.”**

Having said that however, this parable I suspect, is not a favourite of many people. Jesus told this parable near the end of his life. The parable starts our like many of the parables Jesus told, with an invitation. It was an invitation to a party. We think of the parable of the prodigal son and the party on the son’s return.

The party we read about today was organized for the bridegroom. The bridegroom is late for his party. We are not told why, but it could be any number of things. He might have run into some old school chums and they were reconnecting and talking about old times; he may have got into a long discussion on the latest political goings on. In any case, he is late, in fact quite late.

The ten virgins had a long wait and they all fell asleep. Finally someone shouted out, **“He’s here! The bridegroom is here! Go out and greet him.”** The ten virgins took their lamps and the silly ones said to the smart ones, ‘our lamps are going out, lend us some oil.’ ‘There’s not enough, go buy your own.’ So they go and perhaps because it’s getting late there are fewer places to find oil, and when they do they return to a locked door.

According to Jesus, that’s the way God’s kingdom works. A lot of people, and I include myself in that group, are not keen on this story. Stories about parties are great, but this party ends with a locked door. Jesus told many stories about open doors and he said if you knocked on the door it would be opened, no matter how late.

On Sunday, September 20th, the gospel reading was a story about the laborers in the vineyard. Remember some workers came to work early, some came at noon, some came at five o’clock, near quitting time. The last hired were paid first, and they got the same wage as those who were hired first. See, the door is always open. God is gracious.

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Now a number of the virgins may have been foolish, but they are not evil. Yet when they arrive the door is locked. They are excluded. Why would Matthew tell these two stories so **close** together? We are not told why. Could it be that these stories are told because life is like that, the gospel is like that. In one sense there is always time to accept the invitation. However, there comes a time when there is no more time. Life is like that!

This story about being prepared was spoken to a church that became frustrated waiting for Christ to return. It was only some 50 to 60 years before that Jesus had left them. But where was he?

So here we are over 2000 years later and where is he? We have waited much longer than Matthew's community, and the question back them is still with us – are we prepared?

Alvin **Toffler**, in his book "**Future Shock**" made the point that we live in a time which he termed "**the peril of overchoice**". We have more choices today than ever before, more options from which to choose. That creates a problem.

We have too many choices. Some of us grew up with one channel on the t.v., if we had a t.v., now we surf around the channels. It's no wonder we become confused, not knowing whether to step forward or to step back, unable to choose anything out of fear that we may choose the wrong thing. We are paralyzed by overchoice.

There's a true story that comes from the sinking of the Titanic. A frightened woman found her place in a lifeboat that was about to be lowered into the raging North Atlantic. She suddenly thought of something she needed, so she asked permission to return to her stateroom before they cast off. She was granted three minutes or they would leave without her. She ran across the deck that was already slanted at a dangerous angle. She raced through the gambling room with all the money that had rolled to one side, ankle deep. She came to her stateroom and quickly pushed aside her diamond rings and expensive bracelets and necklaces. She reached to the shelf above her bed and grabbed three oranges. She quickly found her way back to the lifeboat and got in.

That seems incredible, because thirty minutes earlier she would not have chosen three oranges over the smallest diamond. But death had boarded the

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Titanic. Values were being transformed, priceless things had become worthless, worthless things had become priceless. Three small oranges over a bag of jewelry.

She was going into the cold Atlantic and one would be more prepared with three oranges than a bag of jewelry. She made a choice!

Joshua in addressing the tribes of Israel urges them to choose whom they will serve, whether it be the God of Israel or idols. Maybe these words of Joshua are meant for us. When Jesus tells of these women who fail to move, fail to act, fail to prepare themselves for the bridegroom's arrival, he might be speaking to us.

We say something like, I'm going to spend more time working out after I retire, or one of these days I plan to.....Yet not to decide is to decide!

This is not an easy parable. It sounds so harsh, so severe, so unlike the graciousness of Jesus. The door was locked. Perhaps our resistance to this parable arises from the fact that it is true! Not to decide is to decide. Certain doors do not remain open forever. One of the reasons for not deciding is that we know if we decide, we are cutting off some options in order to embrace others. Every day is a day of decision because every day some doors are being closed, or opened. Every day certain possibilities are presented or cut off.

Life does not go on forever. There will not always be a tomorrow. Today is the day, as is every day. Choose this day whom you will serve, said Joshua. And the door was locked, said Jesus.

Every parable places a kind of burden upon us. Some are difficult to understand; they depict a world alien to the one we live in. Some parables are hard to believe, the story they tell seems to be inconceivable. Others, like today's, place a different burden upon us. It is not that we don't understand them; we understand them all too well.

I don't like these women being locked out. I don't like it because I can't believe that something like this might happen. I don't like it because – it's true. What about you?

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Prayers:

God of all people, in every generation you have been present with your people: in good times and bad, in sorrow and in joy, in health and in pandemic, in war and peace. Hear our prayer as we remember those in our forces who work for peace, justice and protection.

We thank you, O God, for the resolution of conflicts, the emergence of peace, and the hope of those who are oppressed and hurting. We thank you, too, for those called to serve others in their community. We are grateful for those serving to eradicate this COVID-19 virus.

God of compassion, strengthen and support all who are ill, recovering from COVID-19, from surgery, or any other form of illness.

Gracious God, give to us we pray the perception to see life as it is, to see your kingdom as it is, to see ourselves as we are. Our lives have been offered to us without price, graciously, abundantly, yet demanding that we commit ourselves wholly to you. Help us to move ahead toward your kingdom, to decide, to commit, and to give ourselves to your love.

Deliver us, O God, from the many distractions we face, and put things in perspective for us. Prepare us for what is ahead by granting us a faith that can endure. These our prayers we offer to you in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for time without end. Hear us, as we pray the way Jesus taught us, saying....the Lord's Prayer

Hymn 742

Lead on, O King eternal

COMMISSIONING/BENEDICTION

Watch. We do not know the day when salvation will greet us. Perhaps it is this day; perhaps it is every day. Watch. We do not know the hour when deliverance will come. Perhaps it is this hour. Perhaps it is every hour. Watch. For all who watch will see, and all who see will be known by God.

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