



SERMON STARTER

Matthew 25: 1-13 (NRSV)

Together we do More to Light the Path

“Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.”

Matthew 25: 1-4

The job of the Palestinian bridesmaids in Jesus' time was to wait outside to light the path and welcome the bride and groom to their home. The only light at night would have come from the moon and the stars above, and the small, hand-held lamps.

While we may raise an eyebrow at the wise bridesmaids for refusing to share their oil with those who ran out, the reality is that to fulfill their duties, they needed to make sure that at least some of the lamps would be burning when the wedding party arrived. The whole

procession would have been ruined by spreading what oil they had left among too many lamps, which could have created a situation of no lighting on the path.

Jesus tells this story about the coming of God's realm to remind those who had gathered of the need to be ready. He uses this illustration to **remind us to be ready, to be prepared, to illuminate the path.**

As I look beyond the walls of this church, I wonder if this is exactly the right moment we need to shine a light into the shadows. I wonder who needs to hear the good news that they are made in our Creator's image and are a beloved child of God.

Are you willing to be that light? To share with someone who you sense needs to here this message of good news? ***“No matter who you are, what you have done, or where you are from you are loved by God more than you can ask or imagine.”***



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Connection



So many people are yearning for God's grace and they don't even know it. I wonder if some of the anger we are experiencing in our society comes from frustration in not being able to connect with the source of goodness and light and life that is found in Jesus.

Each of us can offer that invitation in our words and actions as disciples of Jesus. As a church, we can be the source of illumination on the pathway that connects with Divine Love. And when our light joins with others' it shines even more brightly. But we must be prepared.

We hear in this morning's lesson that **it takes everyone's participation to fully light the path.** While surely those who fully participated made sure that there was at least enough light

for the bride and groom to find their way, how much stronger would their journey have been if they had the light of all of the bridesmaids?

It is as a community of Christ that our light shines the brightest. How can we prepare ourselves to fully shine with the brilliance that God has made us to be? And when we join our lamp with the light of millions of other United Methodists can you imagine the impact we can make in the world?

**Through Connection Giving,
we do exactly that . . .
illuminating paths of hope
and love around the world.
Together we do more to
illuminate the path than
we could do with just one or
two lamps.**

Together we illuminate the path for people like Juan Miguel Simpson Bennett who experienced poverty as a child in Panama and who became a Global Ministries missionary. With the help of a **World Communion scholarship** he pursued his call to ministry and now serves as a superintendent to the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas.



- How would your path be different if this community was not here?
- As you go about your week, are there one or two highlights about “THIS CHURCH” that you would share with people in conversation?
- Who in your life needs the path illuminated so that they can experience God’s love?

As I read this morning’s text, I also wonder what it means for us as a congregation.

Together we illuminate the path for addressing hateful rhetoric with **Peace with Justice** funds in places like the Yellowstone Conference. Because half of the funds raised are used in the conference, they are able to engage communities in conversations seeking love and inclusion, while maintaining a peaceful presence.

Together we illuminate the path for creation care through the support of **Africa University**. Five students recently completed research on building a biogas digester to produce renewable clean energy for household use in rural communities.

- What about your path? How has “CONGREGATION NAME” most transformed your life?

Are we willing to keep our lamps full with oil so that we can quite literally “keep our lights on?”

If budgets are moral documents, as you discern your gifts to this body of Christ, what is the importance you place on your offerings?

What is your commitment so that this church is prepared to fully live out the mission God has put before us to shine brightly?

This is a congregation full of possibility. How will you help “CHURCH NAME” keep our light for Christ shining brightly?



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®