

Worship at Home for November 8 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer

Holy God, in the midst of our worries and work,
give us a moment of your peace
so that we may open our minds and hearts to worship you.

Amen

Opening Music: "Give Peace to Every Heart/Da Pacem Cordium"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMo-HSg388E>

Opening Prayer

Give us light, O God -
light for our journeys so that we can be a beacon to others,
light for our hearts to lessen our troubles,
light to illuminate our remembering and keep us alert.
Help us to continue to be witnesses to your love
so that we can continue to share that love with our hurting world.
Amen

Scripture Matthew 25:1-13

'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. 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. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." But he

replied, “Truly I tell you, I do not know you.” Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Reflection

This parable does not always sit comfortably with me. Possibly it is because our celebrations of weddings are far different nowadays. Perhaps it is because this story really focuses on Jesus return – something that we do not often talk about in our churches today.

It is important to consider the context in which the gospel of Matthew is written when we read this parable that only appears in Matthew. Those who continued to follow Jesus’ way and teachings were increasingly being excluded from their synagogues. It had been decades since Jesus had walked and talked and taught, since he had been crucified, and was risen and returned to God. Those who believed in his imminent return were perhaps growing weary. There was probably anxiety and doubt in the waiting, and in the exclusion from their worshipping community, and the temptation to wander from the light of God found in and through Jesus.

When the arrival finally comes, some are missing; they have wandered off believing that they needed to find another source for their light, perhaps forgetting that the light of the arriving bridegroom, of Jesus and of God, would be sufficient for all. The subsequent denial – “I do not know you” is hard to hear. It doesn’t ‘fit’ with the Jesus who welcomed and touched and healed and broke down barriers. After all, both the prepared and the unprepared attendants fell asleep, and those with oil wouldn’t share. It doesn’t seem fair that some are excluded. Perhaps, though, we could look at that statement as “you do not know yourselves, you recognize me but have not trusted that I would provide, you wandered away and I can’t recognize God’s light in you.”

We can certainly grow weary in this time of pandemic, when we are perhaps tired of waiting for safe gatherings with friends, family and church community. We can wander away from God’s light, looking for sources of hope or illumination that will never be as brilliant as God’s light, never be as comforting. Stay alert, though, we are told – stay present to the idea that God’s in-breaking love can appear in our lives at any time. Stay ‘awake’ to the possibilities and to the movement of God’s Spirit.

What are you waiting for in this time? What do you need to stay alert for in your life?

Remembering is also part of the work of being ‘alert’ – we remember our faith stories that tell us of God’s presence despite our doubts. We remember what Jesus has taught us about loving and caring for one another. We remember those who have strengthened us in our faith journeys throughout our lives.

This week, our remembering takes on a special significance, as we are encouraged to remember those who gave their lives in the wars of the past century and more. Remembering them is an act of faith that both honours their sacrifice and reminds us that we must be alert in the world.

Really, we are all waiting – waiting for a pandemic to end, waiting for hope to arrive in our hearts and minds, waiting for a new day filled with God's light. Let's support one another when we grow weary, let's shine with God's light as we can, let's remember our faith stories, our fallen – but most of all let us remember that God is always with us.

Amen

Music: "Keep Your Lamps"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzkAF1S-m-g>

Prayers of the People

Holy God, we know that you are full of love.

Thank you for loving us, and for all the people who remind us of that love, and our call to spread your love and peace in the world.

Today, God, we pray with thanksgiving for veterans of all wars, and their friends and families. We are thankful for those who have fought, for those who stayed home and wrote letters or worked on farms or in factories in wartime, for those who cried as they said goodbye to friends and family, and those who never got to come home and made the ultimate sacrifice.

We are thankful, God, that we live in a country that knows peace right now. Keep showing us how to be peaceful people who seek right relationships with all others. Help us to make friends and not enemies, looking past differences as we learn about each other, so that we can build peace together.

Compassionate God, we thank you for the peace-makers, the bridge-builders, the ones who reach out in love to bring justice and wholeness to people who are ravaged by war, unrest, marginalization and conflict that results in food insecurity, oppression, homelessness, pain and suffering. Today especially we pray for people who serve in organizations like Doctors Without Borders/Medecin sans Frontiers, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Habitat for Humanity, and others in places where their own safety is often at risk.

We thank you, God, for our own friends and families that support us, love us, and accept us. In these challenging times of restrictions, isolation, and change, we are called to bring peace in new ways to those closest to us, never forgetting our own need for peace and hope. Help us to bring comfort to those who are experiencing loss, courage to those who are full of fear, support to people who are experiencing turmoil in their lives.

Caring God, hear the prayers we offer today, as we lift our hearts and voices to you in the prayer that Jesus taught us –

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,

thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Closing music: "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>

Blessing

As you return to your routines and your daily tasks,
may God's light shine within you,
and Christ's radiance surround you,
and the Spirit's glow illuminate your way.
Amen

Remembrance Themed Videos:

United Church Creed with images:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hppit7L6miE>

Under November Skies

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub58BWJ6XpU&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2YvffDG5hrC62oVHfCmdW0T4NLcS04hH_bIXZLqbvTHvyD3FyaN6KCJyM-