

Sunday November 8, 2020
Welcome BACK TO Church
Stewardship Campaign Begins – Sharing our Blessings
The Little Engine that could!
Sermon: Saving for a Rainy Day!

Matt: 25: 1- 13 The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids^[a] took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.^[b] **2** Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. **3** When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; **4** but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. **5** As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. **6** But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ **7** Then all those bridesmaids^[c] got up and trimmed their lamps. **8** The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ **9** 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.’ **10** 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. **11** Later the other bridesmaids^[d] came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ **12** But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ **13** Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.^[e]

“May the Lord add his blessing to the reading and hearing of his word”. Amen

When I was a little girl I received a piggy bank on my 9th birthday. I remember putting coins into it. Now these were the days when you could literally go to a movie for around 50 cents. I can remember going to the Saturday movies and McDonald's for less than a dollar.

Maybe some of you remember those days also? I don't recall getting an allowance but my big weekly chore was to vacuum the whole house including the three flights of stairs in our house in San Francisco. I will tell you that when my husband and I finally bought the house that has become our "forever home", I made sure it was a ONE story. Needless to say I did not like vacuuming those steps.

Every Saturday morning I would faithfully vacuum. I can remember getting my first dollar bills and realizing that they did not fit inside the piggy bank. You know the little slit that coins easily slipped into were fine but the green money didn't.

No matter how small I folded it, and I tried it just did not fit. That left me with a problem, how do I "save" the dollar bills? After a few weeks I had 7 or 8 dollars saved. In 1968 that was actually a lot of money. Remember at McDonald's cheeseburger was 15 cents, a gallon of gas was only 35cents.

Rather than saving it (since it wouldn't fit in my piggy bank anyway) I remember taking that money and going to the mall one Saturday with my mom. There were a pair of boots that I fell in love with and instantly wanted, they were about the same amount of money that I had. I spent all my money on those boots. As I drove home admiring them I suddenly realized "oh no" I don't have any money left. I realized how hard I had worked for them (all of those stairs I had vacuumed) and I specifically remember thinking, I should not have given all my money for just one thing. I should have saved some of it. I realized that I hadn't planned how to spend my money? And now it was all gone.

What if there was something else I wanted, or worse something I needed?

Haven't we all had that "could have had a V-8 moment" when we realized, I might have made a big mistake. It's terrible when we have those doubts and fears when it's actually too late to do anything about it. I had spent every one of those dollar bills and I was so sad. I remember thinking about how long it would take me to save that much money again.

I did enjoy wearing the boots, they were my favorite until my feet grew and I couldn't wear them. Yes, I know basic common sense right, but let's face it we have all had a moment in life where we didn't plan for that rainy day. We didn't see the storm clouds building. We were caught ill -prepared for the events that were coming into our lives.

None of us could have predicted just how this year 2020 would have unfolded. None of us thought back in March that we would not be back to normal life after 8-9 months? We could never have "planned for that". My young adult children who really never understood what struggle was until now have learned with this Pandemic that the job they took for granted might not always be there. They are taking their employment and education a bit more seriously now.

My point is that there are some things that you can plan for, and there are things you simply can't plan for, like a global pandemic.

This story from scripture about having enough oil, and being ready lends insight into this extremely human experience which we all share when at times we are ill-prepared for the future.

Human beings sort of fall into one of three categories when they think about planning and the future:

1. Sometimes we don't plan at all, we adopt a "hey whatever happens attitude, we will deal with the crisis if or when it comes up.
2. We realize that we need to be prepared but we don't take that planning seriously and we end up scrambling at the last minute.
3. Or, three, we plan the event, what steps do we need to take, what are the events that are likely to happen, what events are less likely, and we do our best to prepare for whatever series of events ultimately occur.

So the question today is, which type of "planner are you"?

Do you go into circumstances life events with a point of view that says, hey it will all be ok? I'm not going to worry?

Or, do you think ahead but not really think through all the possible outcomes? And if something goes wrong you are able to regroup and move to plan B?

Or, are you a planner, do you consider every possible outcome that may arise, you spend all your time thinking about all of the "what if's."? Maybe so much that you miss out on the fun, or the adventure, or miss spending time with those you love because you're caught up in the plan?

We all make decisions based on one of those points of view, and likely we have all experienced some event in our lives where we took the wrong approach. And maybe mid-way through a series of events we realized that we had simply not planned correctly, or like me you buy that pair of boots and then immediately regret not saving a little money aside for another day. Age and wisdom have taught us that planning really does relieve tension and trouble in many circumstances, but there has to be a balance in life and sometimes some self-reflection on just why or how we made decisions.

In our younger days we didn't always plan ahead did we, we sometimes assume that everything will be ok. But sometimes something outside of our expectations happens and then we realize oh no, if I'd only done_____?

Sometimes that happens because of a lack of planning, and sometimes something so unexpected happens we could not have planned for that event, sometimes we act foolishly and sometimes we are wise.

The scripture we read illustrates this very human dilemma. The scripture paints a picture of 5 of these young women as foolish and 5 of them are wise.

Any of us could be either of those women on any given day I realized that Jesus was not insulting them, He was just trying to make the point, that each of us has the capacity to be wise or foolish. To be prepared or ill-prepared for the events of our lives. In this case Jesus is specifically talking about having a relationship with Him, Jesus wants us to be ready to meet Him.

Jesus is the Bridegroom and you and I -the Church we are His bride. He is hoping we are ready and waiting for him, not just at the end of the age, but every day, He is hoping we will save time for faith in Him each day. Jesus is reminding us that in spite of our planning and our deep desire to have a relationship with God, sometimes we take that very important part of our life fore-granted also. We have not done our "spiritual planning" we have not spent enough time planning our spiritual life events. We spend all of our time on "living" but forget to save some time for God. We must plan to grow our spiritual walk, and we need to SAVE for a Spiritual raining day, just like any of the other life plans we make.

In this parable Jesus uses a common event in the ancient world, a wedding ceremony, he uses a common and powerful image of bridesmaids waiting for the wedding to begin. Remember the people of Jesus time used lamps, they did not have the luxury of electricity. If they wanted light at night they had to plan ahead, they needed to make sure they had enough oil to last through the night.

In ancient Jewish tradition a marriage was a two-step process. First the engagement or Erusin (ER U SIN) ceremony would mark the engagement, there would be a betrothal ceremony and the bride and groom promise to be faithful to one another.

After the betrothal the groom would go off and pull together the dowry and look for a place for he and his new bride to live. In addition, during that year the bride would make her plans not unlike today, as the bride picks her dress, and flowers and makes a guest list.

That period could be as short as a year but sometimes it would take the groom a few years to prepare to be married. Once he was ready to assume the role of husband and live with his bride the groom would contact the father of the bride and tell him that he would be coming to celebrate the "Nissuin" (NIS-SUE-IN) or finalization of the marriage. It was the father of the bride who gave final approval for him to return to celebrate and begin their life together.

Although the bride knew to expect her groom, she did not always know the exact time. He could come earlier, he might come later. Remember their travel was not like today, typically by foot and the trip might take several days.

So the bride (and the bridesmaids) would keep their oil lamps ready at all times, just in case the groom came in the night, they would need the lamps to participate in the bridal procession. No one would ever want to miss this event, weddings were very important in the ancient world, just as they are today.

In the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids- Jesus likened this event to the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven a very special period of excitement, when the groom comes and finally collects his bride, to begin a new chapter in their life.

Jesus is reminding those that were listening then and to you and I must have a plan, we must be ready, like all of the things we do in life we need to work at our relationship with Jesus. That we must be ready to meet him every day, saving time to spend with him. Jesus wants us to plan, to save some of our oil, just in case. To plan for our lives and our faith wisely.

Even more importantly Jesus wants to commune with us every day. He wants us to make plans to spend time with him. Not to waste time on things that don't bring spiritual wellness, and to save some of our quality time each day for time with our Savior. We should always be ready to welcome him into our lives, and then being ready and able to celebrate with him the love that he has for you and I and enjoy that wonderful celebration of Love.

May the church say Amen.