



**PRESTON  
MEADOW**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

## Sunday Morning Grow Groups

November 8, 2020

*In the Meantime*

- Good morning friends! We pray that this time together will nurture your faith and lead you to deeper trust and dependence upon our God who makes all things possible!
  - **Blood Drive** on November 15th. Watch the bulletin for sign up information; space is limited.
  - We'll take November 29th off from Grow Groups for the Thanksgiving holiday break.
  - Today is the last day to sign up for the Amazing Give. Don't miss out on the opportunity to share generosity in a BIG way! <https://tinyurl.com/amazinggive2021>
  - Lots of things continue to happen around the church. Make sure you are receiving Pastor Paul's weekly email by emailing [communications@pmlc.org](mailto:communications@pmlc.org) to get on the list!
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### Getting to Know You

(spend about 10 minutes here)

*Building personal connections is a key component of Grow Groups, and these questions will help foster deeper connections.*

- *When going on a vacation, do you pack a few days in advance, or do you throw things in a suitcase last minute?*
  - *Do you like to know everything you're going to do at every moment on vacation, or do you like to see what happens with your days?*
  - *When faced with a task do you sit down and plan out the steps/tools you'll need to accomplish the task, or do you dive head first and figure out what you'll need as you go along?*
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### Theme: Getting Ready for God's Kingdom

We're spending the next three weeks of November in Matthew 25 as we round out Year A in the Revised Common Lectionary that helps guide the stories churches can use in their worship practices. The stories we'll hear over the next few weeks talk to us about how the kingdom of God will arrive unexpectedly, how we can be prepared, and what we can do as we await its arrival. The church year culminates with Christ the King Sunday on November 22, and we begin a new church year on November 29 with the start of Advent.

The earliest disciples believed the arrival of God's kingdom was very imminent, like it could happen by the end of the day or the end of the week. As weeks turned into months and months turned into years, they had to temper their expectations and wrestle with the mystery of Jesus' return and what would happen when he came back. The parables in Matthew 25 help us understand what we are called to do in the meantime as we patiently wait for the final and full reign of God to be established in our lives.

## DIVING INTO THE TEXT

(Reading today is from the New Revised Standard Version)

**Background:** Before Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Matthew shares these "end of times" parables with his audience. Matthew's audience is primarily Jewish in background, and his gospel account contains heavy imagery from that tradition. This particular parable talks about the delay in the *parousia*, or the return of the Messiah at the final judgment. It helps us think about how prepared we are for the arrival of God's kingdom, and it prepares us that it may not arrive on a timeline we expect.

+++ (Choose a person to read the following passage) +++

### Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. **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 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 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.

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- When we look at this story a little more closely, we see that all ten bridesmaids took their lamps and a normal amount of oil. However, half of them took an extra flask just in case there was a delay from the groom. It turns out their predictions were right and the groom was very late. Would you consider yourself to be part of the wise group who was more than prepared for the groom's delay, or the foolish group who didn't think the delay would be that long? Why do you choose the group you do?
- Pastor Paul has noticed that this time through the pandemic has made him somewhat forgetful. While we sheltered in place, it was hard to tell one day from the next because normal routines were greatly disrupted. There was no need to dress up and get ready for work and its commute, and school schedules were greatly modified. When you think about the last several months, can you identify with this? What have you done to help center yourself while things were turned upside down?
- Some folks were prepared for when the pandemic hit in March, and they were quick to go out and buy all the essentials -- especially toilet paper. Lots of others were left hunting around town. How does this connect with our story and being prepared?

- A weird vibe we get from the story is the lack of sharing from the five wise bridesmaids. In the church, we tend to operate with a lot of generosity and concern for others, so this feels weird to us that they resist the chance to help. What do you make of this?
- Jesus says the point of the story is to: *Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* How do you understand this?
- We are almost two thousand years removed from this story and still waiting on the arrival of God's kingdom -- how does the Holy Spirit help us stay awake?

**Special Request:** *Who would like to facilitate this group next week?*

### **Closing Prayer.**

Spend a few minutes collecting any special prayer requests from participants.

Grant us, Lord God,  
the vision of your kingdom,  
forgiveness and new life,  
and the stirring of your Spirit,  
so that we may share in your mission of grace  
and proclaim your love,  
in the name of Christ. Amen.

*Connect to Christ!*