

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## The Ten Bridesmaids

Matthew 25.1-13

Many years ago, a friend of mine routinely came to church on Sunday's wearing a t-shirt emblazed with the words:

Jesus is coming – look busy!

It is hard for us to grasp what it will be like when Jesus returns in glory and so Jesus himself used stories we call parables to give us glimpses into those amazing events. Today's reading from Matthew's Gospel has a story that is set in a first century Jewish wedding where the bridesmaids have waited for many hours for the bridegroom to arrive. By the time the bridegroom actually arrives it is midnight and half the bridesmaids have run out of oil for their lamps. I don't know what hours shop keepers kept back then but those without oil had to go shopping in the middle of the night while those with oil joined the bridegroom for a fabulous party. By the time the shoppers arrive back they can't get into the party and end up missing out on everything.

Jesus as the bridegroom is a frequent biblical image and today's story reminds us in his own words that we need to be ready for his return because we 'know neither the day nor the hour'. (Many people have wasted huge effort in trying to predict when Jesus will return which has always struck me as ironic because Jesus specifically says not to bother trying!) The parable of the ten bridesmaids reminds us that Jesus may come back at any time and so we need to live our lives in the light of his impending arrival. Lives that are shaped around his plans, his purposes. Lives that exhibit his generosity with those around us and care for his world. Lives that in short point away from us and towards Jesus.

Such lives are never wasted. Not only do they make the world a better place right now, the trust in Jesus they represent is the invitation to the best wedding party ever when Jesus returns. As an old Swedish hymn puts it:

The watchers on the mountain  
Proclaim the bridegroom near;  
Go forth as he approaches  
With alleluias clear.  
The marriage feast is waiting;  
The gates wide open stand.  
Arise, O heirs of glory;  
The bridegroom is at hand

(Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers by Laurentius Laurentii 1660-1722)

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