

Provoked by the Parables at Brentwood Presbyterian

The Ten Girls

July 3, 2011

Celebrating the Lord's Supper

**Psalm 46 and Matt 25:1-13
(Hymns – 420, 655, 534, 557)**

The parables of Jesus are great stories.
They are intriguing
with many levels of rich meaning.
They make us think.
They challenge our ways of seeing things.
They provoke us to be different,
act in new ways,
make a difference in the world.

The level of meaning that struck me most powerfully this week
is point made at the end of the parable –
be prepared to support Jesus in the kingdom.

The parable indicates that there are important decisions to be made.
Those decisions have to do with us being prepared
to do what is expected of us
when the wedding (or the kingdom) begins.
The kingdom of God, we Christians believe,
began here on earth with the witness and work of Jesus Christ,
who was God in the flesh among us.
It continues to be built through the work of God's Holy Spirit,
drawing people into an intimate relationship with God in Jesus Christ
and empowering them to go out prepared to be Jesus Christ for the world.

This is done primarily through the church,
Jesus Christ's continuing body on earth,
organized into local congregations like this one around the world.

These congregations are the communities
where people are welcomed back into a relationship with God,
nourished to flourish in that relationship,
and sent into the world to serve
in the strength of that relationship.
These are the communities in which people are prepared
to support Jesus in the kingdom.

Last week, we reviewed the five marks of the church,
the five things a faithful congregation
strives to be and do
in order to be prepared to support Jesus Christ in its neighbourhood:

1. be true to the **message**
of the good news of God's grace in Jesus Christ;
2. be faithful in **teaching** that message;
3. be a loving **community**
in which people are welcomed to experience the fruits of God's grace;
4. **praise and pray** together in gratitude for God's grace; and
5. **serve** as stewards of God's grace throughout all creation.

The New Testament Greek words for these marks of the church are
kerygma, didache, koinonia, liturgia, and diakonia.
These are the qualities of a community's work and witness
that feed its health and flourishing.
They are the ways of being prepared
to be a healthy, vibrant, viable congregation.

Are we prepared for intentional acts of grace,
to be Jesus Christ to everyone we meet in our busy lives?
Do we have the oil of God's grace in our lamps,
in these little lights of ours,
so they will shine brightly with God's love
when the opportunity arises -
lend a helping hand, offer a warm smile,
extend a sincere welcome,
invite someone to join us at church
to enjoy the riches of grace by which we are nourished
here at Brentwood?
That's the kind of preparedness that will serve the kingdom
and make this congregation even stronger
as a source of God's grace in this neighbourhood.

And now we gather at the Lord's table
to enjoy the rich feast of abundant life
God offers in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.
This supper prepares us to be God's people in this neighbourhood.
Come and eat.
The bread and wine are the gifts of God for the people of God.