**Sermon for Sunday, November 12, 2017 - “There Is Enough”**

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

November 12, 2017

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Decorah, Iowa

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[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](http://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=731&print_type=text&is_spanish=0)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

“Keep awake”, Jesus said.

When was the last time you struggled to stay awake - in a concert, while driving, while at worship?

When you woke up, did you take a quick check around hoping no one saw you?

When was the last time you overslept? I usually can’t sleep in, even when I want to, but I’m paranoid about oversleeping so I always set a number of alarms. They didn’t help one morning before an early flight out of Minneapolis, however. I’d stayed overnight with my aunt in St. Paul and we stayed up talking long into the night. I slept through five alarms on my phone and woke up at the time I was hoping to get to the airport. I made it to the security line as they were paging my name for a final boarding call. I made it to the gate right before they closed the airplane door, a door that cannot be reopened. I felt quite foolish and unprepared.

Oversleeping and sleeping when we’re not supposed to can induce all sorts of shame, panic, fear and anger.

I wonder if that dynamic is at play with the bridesmaids in this parable. After all, Jesus ends the parable by saying, “keep awake therefore.”

Often this parable is thought to be about preparedness.

We take it to mean that we must have enough oil for our lamps or else we’re in trouble. And we worry that we don’t have enough of whatever we think oil means in this parable - enough faith, enough joy, enough energy for service in the world.

But notice, Jesus doesn’t say, “be prepared therefore” make sure you have enough oil because no one’s going to share it with you if you don’t. You run out, you’re outta luck, shut out forever.

No, Jesus says keep awake. Jesus calls us to be alert, attentive, and watchful for the kingdom of heaven coming in our midst. When we don’t remain alert and attentive to the bridegroom, Jesus, who is bringing God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, then we become panicked, fearful and distrustful.

That seems to be what happens to the bridesmaids. None of the bridesmaids in the story are awake or alert when the bridegroom comes; they’ve all fallen asleep. When he comes at midnight, they’re all startled awake, and they all begin to freak out.

The foolish bridesmaids realize they don’t have enough oil and begin to *demand* it of the wise bridesmaids. But the wise bridesmaids don’t exactly respond in stellar fashion, either. They refuse to share because they might not have enough.

This is not exactly kingdom-of-God thinking. Throughout scripture we’re told to let go of our fear of scarcity and trust in God’s abundance. Jesus instructs us, “give to everyone who begs from you.” But the wise bridesmaids respond with the opposite of generosity and faithfulness saying, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.”

The foolish bridesmaids then live up to their name by listening to the wise bridesmaids - they go out to look for an oil dealer at midnight. They wander around in the dark without any light source because the oil in their lamps has run out - and this is way before street lights. Good luck with that.

Somehow, they manage to find an insomniac oil dealer but by the time they return, the party is in full swing and the door is shut. It’s too late for them to welcome the bridegroom and be welcomed into the party.

The foolish bridesmaids miss out on the feast because they leave the party desperately searching for what they lack. They assume they won’t be accepted without it. But it isn’t the bridegroom who tells them that they have to leave to get more oil. It’s the wise bridesmaids who worry there won’t be enough.

What if the foolish bridesmaids had stayed and welcomed the bridegroom even if they didn’t have enough oil? Rather than leaving and frantically racing around trying to compensate for what they lacked, what if they’d stayed with the party? Perhaps the oil would’ve lasted - the scriptures show that God provides abundantly when all we see is scarcity. And if it did run out, what if they’d humbly approached the bridegroom to say, “I’m sorry, I’m out of oil, please forgive me?”

Why did they listen to the voices that told them there wasn’t enough, that they had to go search in the dark rather than trusting themselves to the bridegroom? Did they assume he would be harsh and unforgiving? Throughout scripture God is described again and again as being slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

And what if the wise bridesmaids had willingly shared their oil? What if they’d paid attention to God’s prophets, like the prophet Amos today, the prophets who make it clear that God does not want celebration and feasting if all are not included in God’s abundance, if there is not justice, shalom and well-being for all?

What if all the bridesmaids had been alert and attentive to the kind of bridegroom they were going to meet? Would anyone have excluded then? We are so often like the bridesmaids. We so often exclude ourselves and others from the feast of God’s kingdom that is coming among us in Jesus.

We so often remain outside the celebration, stuck in our worry, thinking we can’t fully enter in until we have done enough or have more of what it takes. We listen to voices of scarcity and anxiety telling us we need more - more energy, more light, more joy, before we’ll be welcomed.

And because we live in a culture made up of insomniac oil dealers, there is always some store, some site, open night or day, that’s peddling a product, a service or a new approach to life that they claim we just have to have in order to be OK. 24/7 we can find someone who will tell us we’re not enough unless we have what is being sold. There are so many ways that we miss the presence of the bridegroom Christ and the kingdom coming among us.

But Christ comes again today to awaken us from our groggy, anxious states. He comes to us as he does each time we hear scripture and share in the sacraments. Christ comes to awaken us to God’s coming kingdom, to get our attention so that we look to him for what we need rather than trying to find it on our own. Christ makes us alert to the Gospel truth that there is enough, that we are enough, that we and all people are welcomed to the feast of God’s abundance. With this assurance, we are free to share what we have been given so that all people can find their place at God’s table. You are enough, there is enough for all, come and eat, then go and share.

Thanks be to God.