The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Year A
Sunday, 8th November 2026

Keep Your Lamps Burning A sermon based on Matthew 25:1–13
Readings: Amos 5.18-24: Psalm 70; 1 Thess. 4.9-18; Matthew 25.1-13

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May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

There is something familiar about waiting in the country. We know what it is to wait for rain, to watch the clouds gather on the horizon, to hope that the forecast is right. We know that some things simply cannot be hurried. The seasons come and go in their own time, and there are times when all we can do is prepare, remain patient and trust.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus tells a story about ten bridesmaids waiting for a wedding. They have been invited to welcome the bridegroom, but he is delayed. As the hours pass, they grow tired and all ten fall asleep. When the announcement finally comes that the bridegroom is approaching, they wake and prepare their lamps.

But there is a problem. Five of them have brought extra oil, while the other five have not. The foolish bridesmaids discover that their lamps are going out. They are unprepared for the long wait, and when they go off to buy more oil, the bridegroom arrives. The door is shut, and they miss the celebration. Jesus finishes with a simple but challenging instruction: "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Now, this parable is not really about oil, or wedding arrangements, or even about being sensible enough to bring spare supplies. It is about how we live while we wait for God's kingdom to come in all its fullness.

And waiting is not always easy.

We live in a world where people want things immediately. We want rain when the paddocks are dry, answers when life is uncertain, healing when someone we love is sick, and peace when there is trouble in the world. Sometimes God seems a long time coming.

It can be tempting to become discouraged, to let our faith grow dim, or to assume that nothing much is happening. But Jesus reminds us that the Christian life is a life of readiness. Not a nervous readiness, constantly worrying about what might happen, but a faithful readiness: living each day with God, trusting his promises and keeping our lamps burning.
And what does that look like in practice?

It looks like continuing to pray, even when the words are difficult to find. It means showing kindness to a neighbour, lending a hand when someone is struggling, forgiving someone who has hurt us, and caring for those who are lonely or overlooked.
It means coming together as God's people, worshipping, encouraging one another and passing on the faith to the next generation.

These things may seem small, but they are the oil that keeps our lamps burning. They are the everyday habits of a life shaped by Christ.
There is another important detail in the parable. All ten bridesmaids fall asleep. Even the wise ones. Jesus is not asking us to be endlessly busy or never to grow tired. Faithfulness is not about never having doubts or never feeling weary. It is about being prepared, having a faith that is rooted deeply enough to sustain us through the long nights.

And we do not have to do this alone. We have the promises of Christ, the encouragement of one another, and the sustaining grace of God.
So, as we go about our lives in this community, through the ordinary routines and the unexpected challenges, let us keep our lamps burning.
We do not know the day or the hour when Christ will come. But we do know the one who has promised to come.
May he find us faithful, hopeful and ready to welcome him.
Amen.