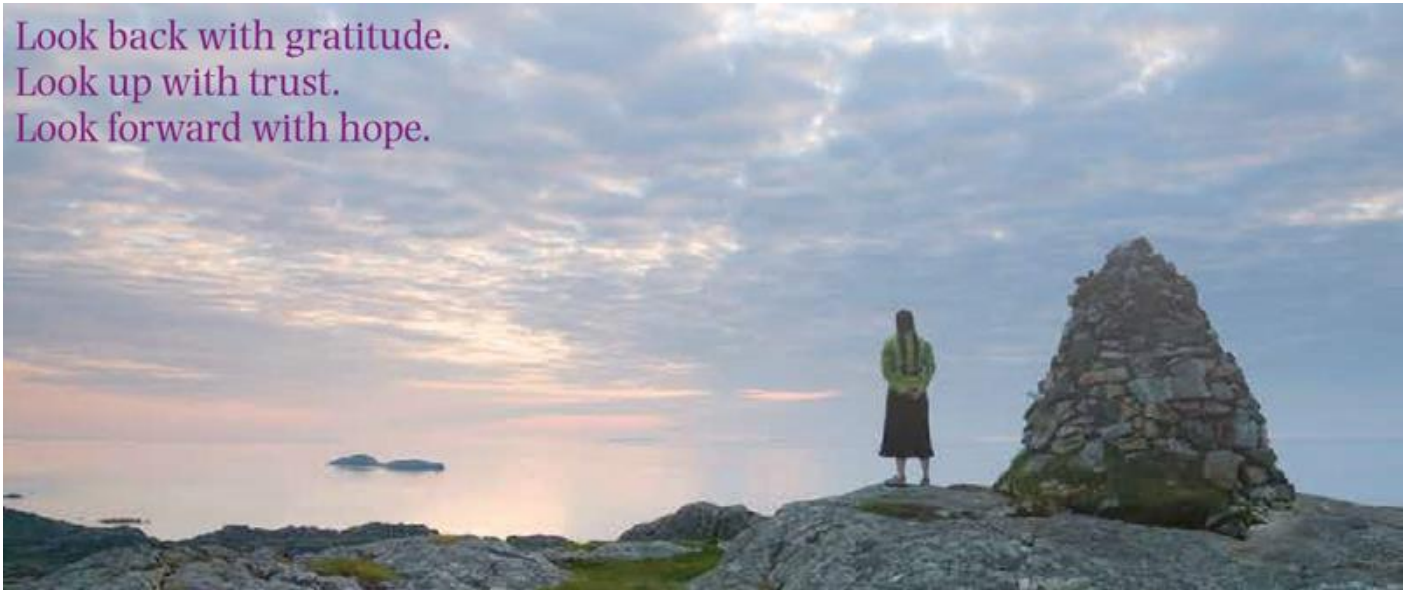




Remembrance Sunday Being Prepared!

A service by Zoom on Sunday 8th November 2020

Look back with gratitude.
Look up with trust.
Look forward with hope.



Welcome

Our service today is focused on the gospel reading from Matthew 25 about the 5 wise and the 5 foolish virgins when Jesus teaches about the importance of being ready for the coming of the Son of Man. As the nation remembers those who have lost their lives in conflict, we also mark Remembrance Sunday.

Hymn – Lord of Creation (Singing the Faith 449)

Our opening hymn focuses on God's nature and calls us to committed service and in verse 5 notes how we might stumble and fall (like the 5 foolish bridesmaids).

1. Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous
your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you
dwell.

2. Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfill.
Your bondage is freedom, your service is
song;
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is
strong.

3. Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses man's knowledge
to find.
What eye has not seen and what ear has
not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from
your Word.

4. Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart;
your love to inspire me, your counsel to
guide,
your presence to cheer me, whatever
betide.

5. Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if ever I disown you, I stumble and fall;
but, sworn in glad service your word to
obey,
I walk in your freedom to the end of the
way.

(Jack Copley Winslow 1882 – 1974)

Prayer

We are both foolish and wise; patient and impatient; faithful and faithless.

So, we come to you this morning, Lord Jesus, in all our weakness and all our strength and ask your blessing on our worship, our fellowship and our lives.

God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all,
we thank you for the gift of eternal life that brings hope in our grief
and consolation in our loneliness.

May we be bearers of light to those in the darkness of loss and despair,
and givers of life when doors are shut, and all seems hopeless.

We realise that we often fall short and remember those times

when we have not taken the oil of kindness to those who are hurting;

When we have failed to take the oil of encouragement to those who are downhearted;

When we have not taken the oil of friendship to those who are lonely;

When we do not take the oil of hope to those in despair;

When we do not take the oil of the gospel to those who have not heard it;

Father, forgive us in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Reading – Matthew 25:1-13

¹ "At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Once there were ten young women who took their oil lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and the other five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them, ⁴ while the wise ones took containers full of oil for their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was late in coming, so they began to nod and fall asleep.



⁶ "It was already midnight when the cry rang out, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come and meet him!' ⁷ The ten young women woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ Then the foolish ones said to the wise ones, 'Let us have some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' ⁹ 'No, indeed,' the wise ones answered, 'there is not enough for you and for us. Go to the store and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ So the foolish ones went off to buy some oil; and while they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. The five who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was closed.

¹¹ "Later the others arrived. 'Sir, sir! Let us in!' they cried out. ¹² 'Certainly not! I don't know you,' the bridegroom answered."

¹³ And Jesus concluded, "Watch out, then, because you do not know the day or the hour.."

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Comment

Remembrance Sunday is a day when we choose, deliberately, to look at the horror of war. War is not glorious, it is not romantic, it is not pretty, yet we look back into our nation's past to the suffering of the First World War and of all the wars that have raged since.

We look back for a purpose – we look back, so we don't forget. We can learn with gratitude from those who have suffered for us. Not to romanticise or to glorify conflict but to recall how truly horrific war is in order that we might commit ourselves to stopping it – to stop a past of violence continually repeating itself. The author Maya Angelou wrote 'History, despite its

wrenching pain, cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.' Indeed, that is our prayer.

However, war is still with us. In each of the years since 1919, around a quarter of a million people have died because of conflict. Looking back to a past of violence that we might build peace in the present has not been as successful as we might have hoped. So perhaps instead we might try instead to look forward to the future.

Our reading today does just that. It looks towards the end times In our gospel story Jesus has been talking to the disciples about the destruction of the Temple (which came about in AD70) and has been encouraging his disciples to look ahead to the final coming of the Son of Man at an unknown time. Matthew uses poetic language to express the unknown and the unknowable.

The parable that Jesus tells is often women who are preparing for a wedding. They will escort the groom with torches – the sort that comprise a rag on a stick, dipped in fuel and held up (not the sort of small oil lamp that was used indoors).

The groom is delayed and the women who hadn't reckoned on a long wait grow drowsy and fall asleep. When the groom appears at midnight, the five wise ones are ready and have flasks of oil with their torches while the five foolish ones are not prepared. Jesus was almost certainly casting himself as the bridegroom (as in two earlier stories in Matthew's gospel). The foolish women ask the wise ones if they will share their oil but in reply, they suggest that there wouldn't be sufficient and that the foolish women should go and buy more oil.

The parable reminds us that we cannot ultimately rely on others to enter the Kingdom of God. It's a matter of personal responsibility to live a spiritual life of service. We can be inspired and encouraged by others but that will never replace our own efforts. As lockdown is stepped up again, what can we do to develop our own spiritual lives and to be alert to the needs of those around us?

The five wise women who were ready went with the groom while the five foolish ones went off to buy oil. When the foolish women arrived at the wedding feast the doors were shut and the lord disowned them. Only those who are ready will get to enjoy the banquet.

The parable finishes with the summary 'watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.' The main message is therefore about being ready to meet Jesus – living each day on the basis that it may be your last. Nobody knows when we may 'fall asleep' and when the bridegroom may appear and 'wake us'.

The parable reminds those of us within the church that our condition isn't unconditionally assured. We must make the most of the time that is given to us to prepare ourselves, wait hopefully, act responsibly, respond faithfully and willingly respond to the call of Christ as we hear it in our lives shaped by the example and teachings of Jesus. The call for alertness and sensible service in the passage mean that we must actively keep in view the lessons from the past to ensure that the sacrifices required then are not necessary in the future.

A saying from the middle ages says 'Time is more important than all eternity. Here you can prepare for the Lord. There you cannot.' Wise disciples will remain awake in whatever circumstances they live, alert to the circumstances around them and aware of the impact on their own hearts and minds. Amen.

Prayers for Others

Lord Jesus, we pray for those who wait.
We pray for those waiting beside hospital beds;
for those waiting for justice;
for those waiting for prison doors to open;
for those waiting for an end to war;
for those waiting for food;
for those waiting for loved ones to come home again;
for those waiting for someone to knock on their door.
We wait with them,

in our prayers and in your name,
we wait with them.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn – Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine (Singing the Faith 548)

Our closing hymn reminds us that we do look forward to a banquet but in the meantime we watch and wait for the coming of the Son of Man.

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This is my story...

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Saviour am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

This is my story...

(Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) 1820 – 1915)

Blessing

Be wise when others are foolish; patient when others rush; confident when others are cautious; and may God's love be the oil that keeps your lamp burning through this coming week and always. Amen.



Questions to ponder

What does this symbol mean to you?

What is your hope for the future?

How might you help others in a time of grief?

What have you learnt from the past that you would like to pass on so that others are prepared when a crisis comes?