

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
318 4<sup>th</sup> STREET BOX 385 GAYLORD, MN, 55334

November 8, 2020



**MEDITATION**

Booker T. Washington, 20<sup>th</sup> century

"Lay hold of something that will help you, and then use it to help somebody else."

**PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP**

**"CHANGE THE WORLD"**

**DAN STEVERS**

**WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH**

**NO MATTER WHO I AM, NO MATTER WHERE I AM ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, I AM WELCOME HERE.**

**NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!**

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

ONE: WHO ARE YOU?

**ALL: I AM A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD!**

ONE: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

**ALL: I AM A PERSON OF WORTH TO BE VALUED!**

ONE: THEN WHAT WILL YOU DO?

**ALL: I WILL LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE OF MYSELF  
AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE**

**ADVENT DEVOTIONS CAN STILL BE TURNED IN. DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 15.**

**PRELUDE**

SANDY WENTZLOFF

**THE CALL**

**Psalm 78:1-7**

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of God, we will tell of God's might, and the wonders that God has done. God established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which God commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, that they might rise up and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget God's works, but keep God's commandments;

**SENTENCES OF WORSHIP**

Wisdom of Solomon 6: 12-16

One: Call upon God's Wisdom

**People: She will answer!**

One: Seek God's Wisdom

**People: She dwells in the midst of life.**

One: Follow God's Wisdom

**People: She leads in the paths of light and generosity.**

**GATHERING HYMN**

**"GLORIOUS THINGS OF THEE ARE SPOKEN"**

**GATHERING PRAYER**

Holy God,

We hear echoes of your Wisdom in Christ Jesus, the One you sent to dwell in our midst and lead us to abundant life. Keep us alert to the call to follow, ready to respond with justice and joy in your holy moment, which is always Now.

**CONFESSION** Amos 5: 18-24

One: Though we may delight to be here, together, in worship, let us remember that the Prophet Amos offers us a word from God to challenge any complacent comfort. Our praise, our worship, our singing, however beautiful and heartfelt, must be accompanied by the work of justice in community.

What pleases God is to have justice pour from our lives like waters, and righteousness from our work, like an ever-flowing stream.

So let us pause for a moment: what parts of our lives, our community, our world, are thirsting for waters of Justice and Righteousness?

*Silence*

**ASSURANCE OF GRACE**

One: God's grace flows through our lives, refreshing and making all things new. Let this grace flow from us as justice and righteousness, that our lives and work may bless our world, In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**PIANO RESPONSE**

*"GLORIA"*

**LEXIONARY TEXT**

**Matthew 25:1-13**

[Jesus said:] "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

**SERMON**

*"During the Delay"*

Oh, the idea of single people going to weddings in order to find a mate. . . or at least a date! The subject of many movies. The antics of trying to get someone's attention. To get someone to notice you. To wear the right suit, the dazzling dress, the crisp hair cut or 'do. Everything to be noticed, and to be noticed as a great opportunity for "happily ever after."

This is an odd parable today. One that involves wedding practices that are unfamiliar to us today. Bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom to arrive to go into the wedding. We are more familiar with the bride waiting for the father to come and bring her into the ceremony. Or perhaps the groom being brought into the service by the bride's father carrying a shot gun. These are images to which we can resonate.

But here we have the image of women waiting with their lamps for the bridegroom. Does the groom always come in the night and thus they need lamps in order to be seen? To be noticed? To be invited? We are told that the bridegroom has been delayed and the regular lamp filled with oil has run out, or wasn't filled in the first place. Maybe the lamp was a tradition but the groom usually came before nightfall and no oil was actually needed. Or maybe most bridegrooms are more punctual!

But whatever the tradition, we have an early story of single people coming to the wedding in order to be a part of the celebration . . . hopefully being noticed as we can imagine today.

The parable is odd in other ways as well. It presents a picture of wise vs foolish where wise are rewarded and foolish are not only left out but rejected as not even being known. It presents an incident where the wise do not share with the foolish. Seems to go against the other stories of Jesus' generosity and stories of taking care of one another.

The traditional interpretation of this parable is like the scout motto, "be prepared." It sets forth the idea that you never know how long it will take the bridegroom to get to you and thus you need to bring enough oil to last for an extended wait.

We then interpret this to mean we never know when Jesus will return so we should always live as Jimmy Carter says "We should live our lives as though Christ was coming this afternoon."

How many of you believe that Christ will return some day? How many of you believe this will happen in your lifetime? If you do, does that affect how you live each day? Or is it just a religious belief that is taught in Sunday school but not relevant to our daily lives? How much oil will you need?

If you do not believe Christ will return in your lifetime, how does that affect how you live each day? Do you think about it much or at all?

Waiting is one of the hardest things we can do, whether we are waiting for something good or something frightening. Something so such as the birth of a healthy child, the closing on the house of your dreams, the promotion in a job or acceptance from college, is a lot different than waiting for something that is hard—waiting to see if this time you will be able to get pregnant, or for the foreclosure of your home because you couldn't make the payment, or the doctor's report confirming that the cancer has returned. And whether you are waiting for something good or hard, when the anticipated arrival is delayed, it's almost always anxiety-provoking: why haven't I heard from the college admissions office? Have they arrived safely? When will we hear from the doctor? The waiting, indeed, is the hardest part.

Waiting is difficult and what we do in the meantime is part of what this parable is about today. What do we do while we are waiting? The parable gives us the impression that what we do will affect the outcome when the waited upon event occurs. If you have kept you light burning, you will receive your reward. If you have not kept the light burning, if you have not kept the faith, you will lose out when the event takes place.

This is different than waiting for the news of closing or foreclosure. It is different than waiting for the expected phone call from the admissions office or the doctor. What we do in the meantime is not going to affect the outcome at all. The tests have been taken, the applications have been filled out and sent in. The lack of being able to make house payments has already done the damage. What you do while you wait will not change what the doctor says.

The parable today is dealing with issues of faith. Jesus gives the parable of what we call the wise and foolish maidens to give us the insight that his return may be delayed. Even in Matthew's report of this parable, 40 to 50 years have passed since Jesus told it. The generation to which Jesus was speaking is probably dead. The message comes to people who have been waiting for a generation. For them, reading Matthew's gospel is like reading the journal of their grandparents or great grandparents. We find it difficult to wait for the cake to come out of the oven, let alone decades. What do you do to keep the faith alive until Christ comes again when you have no idea when that will be and how long it will take before it happens?

For us, add another 2000 years in which Christ has not returned and then ask the questions that I asked previously: Who believes Jesus will return...return in your lifetime? Whatever your answer, how do you live in the meantime?

Let us admit that waiting for Jesus' imminent return is difficult for most of us to entertain. But let us also recognize that opportunities for waiting on Jesus' presence are all around us. David Lose suggests various ways we can spend our time:

Each time we work for justice, we testify to the presence of Jesus.

Each time we bear each other's burdens, we testify to Jesus' presence.

Each time we advocate for the poor, or reach out to the friendless, or work to make this world God loves a better place, we testify to the presence of the Risen Christ

Deciding what to do in the meantime does affect our sense of peace, of grace, of servanthood as we wait. Even waiting for the report on our house, on college admission, on a doctor's report, what we do affects our sense of peace and acceptance of the situation in which we find ourselves. And that is the witness to our faith.

Do we live as though we have hope that Christ will return? Do we live with the faith and confidence that God is with us every moment of the waiting? Do we realize that how we live in the meantime gives witness to others as to what we believe about our God, the Spirit, and the coming of the Risen Christ?

Have you ever been around the dramatic person who when waiting cannot seem to focus on God during the waiting period and be calm knowing that whatever the news God will be present? That whatever the news, they have not been waiting alone and they will not be alone in facing the news? Have we let the fear of the unknown over take the truth of the known? God is present.

You know. When the wedding is over, whether you have met the person of your "happily ever after" or not, life goes on. And it goes on with God.

Maybe the best thing we can do in the meantime is to keep the light of God's presence alive in our hearts, in our soul, so that we can see God at work in our lives, today and when the end of life comes.

Thanks be to God!

#### **HYMN**

*"BE THOU MY VISION"*

#### **PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

#### **INVITATION TO OFFERING**

One: Readiness for Mission is one way to interpret the diligence of the Wise Wedding Attendants. Their lamps are filled and available to be sparked into light at the moment the Beloved appears to begin the wedding feast of justice, love and peace.

Let us be ready, too, with our tithes and offerings,  
to support the work of our congregation and the wider church.

## DEDICATION

One: Let us pray.

People: **God, we have come, and given generously of our gifts.  
Take, bless and multiply them so that they may be a blessing  
in your world. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

SENDING HYMN "GO MY CHILDREN WITH MY BLESSING"

## BENEDICTION

Keep your lamps filled and your hearts open, ready for the call of God.  
Go in peace, counting on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God, and the sweet communion of\* the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen!**

## POSTLUDE

Sandy Wentzloff



## GUCC ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

On November 29<sup>th</sup> we enter the church year season of Advent.

Advent is a "Season of Hope."

If there ever is a time when we need hope, it is this year! Will you help nourish your fellow congregational members in hope? I need 27 people to write a devotion centered on *hope* of about two paragraphs in length. You might want to write about a scripture or what is renewing your hope at this time or what is the basis of your hope, or whatever you feel would be of benefit to members of the congregation. Please email me at [dmckee545@gmail.com](mailto:dmckee545@gmail.com) soon and share that you are willing to share a devotion. **I will need to receive your devotion via email or at the church office by November 15 so that the booklet can be compiled before the beginning of Advent. Thank you for being a part of this project of Hope!**

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**Remember in Prayer:** Greg Armstrong (Howard's brother), Dick Carlson, Ann Pinske (Ted's sister-in-law), Ewald Keller, Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and others at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

**Our sympathy and prayers go to the family of Sandi Knoche who passed away on Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.** There are no current plans for a memorial service due to Covid-19. A memorial service may be held at a later time. Cards of condolence can be sent to Sandi's sister at: Barb Knoche 5127 Nicollet Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55419-2615

A link to Sandi's Caring Bridge site where people can leave a message for the family is:  
<https://www.caringbridge.org/public/sandiknoche>

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371

Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371. E-mail: [dmckee545@gmail.com](mailto:dmckee545@gmail.com) • Website at [listen2god.org](http://listen2god.org)

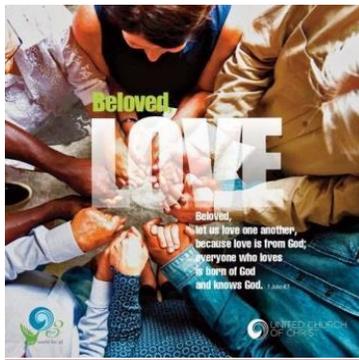
- ❖ Our **From the Heart Offering** in **November** goes to ***Santa's Helpers***. Deposit your donation in the Heart Basket near the Sanctuary doors.
- ❖ **Men's Fellowship** meets every **Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. in church in the Fireside Room.**
- ❖ **Women's Fellowship is again selling dish cloths.** There are multiple colors and the cost remains at \$1.00 each. They will be on the table in the Fellowship Hall.

**Mark your Calendar:**

**All Church decorating** in preparation for Advent – **Sunday, November 22 after church.**

**Hanging of the Greens Celebration Service** – **Sunday, November 29 at 9:30 a.m.**

Tithes, Offerings and Pledges can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ  
P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334. *You can also donate on our website  
or drop off at the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.*



The words of 1 John 4:7-21 boldly announce and pronounce what we need to hear. What our world needs to hear today. What we as the Church, we as the people of God, need to embody today. ***God IS love!***

In the United Church of Christ, we hear God calling us to Three Great Loves.

**Love of Neighbor. Love of Children. Love of Creation.**

***And this love is our hope. This love is our calling. And this love is our mission.***

In the United Church of Christ we give ourselves to answering God's call to love

**As you consider your giving for the coming year, you will take a step towards greater generosity in your pledge.**

You should have received your 2021 Pledge letter and Time and Talent sheet in the mail or email. Please take a minute to fill it out and return via mail, email, or turn in to the church office as soon as possible. ***Thank you.***

**Stewardship Sunday is November 15 as we give thanks for the gifts that have been given.**