

Do We Carry Oil?

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

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Year A: Pentecost 24: Matthew 25:1-13

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But 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.’ ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

If oil is the stuff that keeps us going, what kind of oil do we carry? How do we carry it? In our hearts and minds? God will help us refill. If we're filled up on God's oil, then it's much easier to share with others and let God's light shine!

God's grace and love be with us this day. Amen.

If you've been around for awhile, you've figured out that the Holy Spirit can write about one billion sermons on every text in the Bible. We humans? Not that many. But for God? Absolutely any number of things to preach, in one text.

So let's do a multiple choice. Which sermon would you like to hear today?

- A. *Boy Scout sermon – Always be prepared.*
- B. *End of times sermon – Jesus is coming back! Stay awake!*
- C. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth sermon – God shut the door on me!*
- D. *Renewal sermon – Do we carry oil?*

Of course, we could hear the Boy Scout sermon – “Always Be Prepared”. But that only turns Jesus' parable into a morality sermon about right and wrong behavior. Church history and tradition have given us enough of that for centuries. True, we ought to be prepared, but never much of a motivator.

The end of times sermon, “Jesus is Coming Back! Stay Awake!” is often a yawner, because while we might believe it’s true, we don’t spend much time dwelling on Jesus’ return date and time. This is because even He, Jesus says, even He doesn’t know when His plane will land.

The weeping and gnashing of teeth sermon, “God Shut the Door on Me!” will surely require us to use our new AED for those of you who have heart attacks listening to it. So that’s a goner. Out of the question.

The renewal sermon, “Do We Carry Oil?” has never been preached, at least by me. Lucky for all of us, today is the day, thanks to Rev. Anna Carter Florence for the idea.

Carter Florence says this, “For all we know, the wise bridesmaids were down to their last flask of oil, and the foolish bridesmaids were sitting on barrels of the stuff; the parable doesn’t tell us. Its only concern is what they brought with them when they left the house.”ⁱ

While the parable clearly makes a distinction between the prudent or wise bridesmaids and the foolish ones, it doesn’t tell us how much oil they did or didn’t have at home. We know only the amount of oil they do or don’t carry with them to the party. The foolish brought none. The wise brought a flask.

Weddings in Jesus’ time often lasted days. If you were waiting for a groom to appear, you might have had a very long wait. He could easily get delayed at the previous house or event. What is a bridesmaid to do?

Ever get stuck waiting somewhere? The line at the post office at Christmas? I-25 traffic jam? **What keeps you going at times like these? More to the point, what keeps your spirit up when your lamp runs dry of oil?**

Have you ever watched a taper candle burn all the way out? It’s in a breezy room, so the wax begins falling quickly down the side. Within say 30 minutes, what was once a brightly lit candle, is only a heap of cold wax. Hmm... **“Let your light so shine before others, so they may see...God.”** How can a Christian let their light shine when we are only a heap of cold wax? *How can any of us when we are weary, or tired, or spiritually dried up find new oil?*

The question isn’t should we find more oil. It’s a necessity. Go to the gas station, refill. Period. Because none of us are going anywhere if we’re not carrying oil.

Now there are some who will blatantly not share what they have to renew anyone else. “No, you better run to the market and buy some. We brought our own.”

There are others who will want to sell you more oil for their own profit. Your lack of energy and despondency is their gain. “Buy this product and we promise you a new life! Guaranteed.”

For we Christians, the oil we carry everywhere we go is from God. As Carter Florence asks, ‘What fills you up spiritually when you run dry? What replenishes your oil? Where do you find God, and how can you make sure that you get enough of that oil for your lamp, so that God can fill you up again?’ ⁱⁱ

Some people go to the deep well of scripture or prayer. The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse, Wisconsin, have prayed continuously since August 1, 1878. through the present day. The sisters rotate in pairs to pray for members of their community, the people of La Crosse, the nation, and the world. This community highlights a deep sense of faithfulness, shared responsibility, and attention to how God is calling them to be present.ⁱⁱⁱ The sisters’ continuous prayer is a renewal of God’s oil in their lives and our oil.

Other people love to share oil to renew their reserves. They want to live out Jesus’ words of loving neighbor in word and deed. The Thursday Bible study group decided they want to care for our congregation better. A new phone tree will be formed. If you would like to receive a check-in call, you can. If you wish to make a call, you can. Fabulous renewal of our spirits come when we share. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

All of us realize that God’s reinvigorating oil is with us in every breath. The Holy Spirit who lives inside is at our ready call. “Come, Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit. Be with me now, for I am thankful. Bless me now, for I am afraid. Lord, I am lonely, come, Spirit, come.”

What is your oil flask – which you carry – filled up with? Is it a core belief that God loves you? That God is with you?

This kind of oil is better than any TV program or snack in the pantry. So if you don’t know, figure it out. Then let God fill up your flask in joy! Jesus is coming! Amen

ⁱPreaching Year A with ANNA CARTER FLORENCE. Reflections on the Gospel Readings (2016–2017)
Revised Common Lectionary. © 2016 Published by Luther Seminary. St. Paul, MN. Pg 139ff

ⁱⁱibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#resources>