

**Call to Worship**

As we begin our worship, these words are for our thinking this morning: “What does the Lord require of you? On this day of all days, as we remember men and women, who gave their everything for us, we gather here to honour their memory and give thanks.

What does the Lord require of you? On this day of all days, we come seeking peace for all, in a world that cries out for it. We come seeking to love the unloved and to live humbly with our Lord.

What does the Lord require of you? On this day of all days, we come to Him in worship and praise. Let us worship the God of love and peace.”

**Act of Remembrance**

Hymn – Lord of all being, throned afar, (CH4 125)

**Scripture Reading: Isaiah 2 vs 1 – 5:**

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ‘In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Let us also hear these words of Jesus from the Gospel of John:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

(John 14:27)

This is a time of quiet remembering, of silent gratitude for past sacrifices, and of offering deep thoughts to God.

This is a time of expressing pain and regret, of recalling those who did not return from war, of acknowledging the pain of those who have returned, but are forever wounded in body or in mind, and of praying for those who are still engaged in conflict.

This is a time of recommitment to the purposes of God, whose Son said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." "Love one another, as I have loved you."

**If you are able would you, please stand.**

Let us remember before God, and commend to His sure keeping, those who have died for their country in war. Those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of mankind.

We read these words in the Old Testament book of the prophet Micah: "With what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

Let us pray.

Not just for yesterday, Lord God, not even for just for today, but also for tomorrow, we stand in silence.

We stand this morning, like measured ranks in a foreign field, stone upon stone, name upon name, date upon date.

Stones. Stones not worn by the passing of the seasons, names not yet forgotten by the passing generations, dates too full of memories as year encircles year.

We stand, with pictures in our minds. Pictures of repatriation, of tears from families and friends for their hero, who now is also ours.

Almighty and Eternal God, Your prophet promised your people of old a name and a place where they might always be remembered.

So, we now hold those names before you. Names etched in granite. Names carved on our hearts. We stand in this place which we know is Holy ground because You are here.

We stand mindful of the sacrifice, aware no words of ours can ever be sufficient. We stand once more recommitting ourselves to follow the ways of the Prince of Peace.

We stand in silence before an empty cross, the eternal sign of the God who loves His world and who wants for all His children the peace this world can neither give nor take away.

Lord God, we stand in silence.

***The Last Post***

***2 Minutes Silence***

***The Reveille***

***“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them.”***

Where wars are still waged, and lives are still lost, where terrorism is feared, and where worst fears are confirmed, come, God, bring safety and strength.

To the leaders of the nations, to all at whose deciding there is war or peace, to members of our Armed Forces, still serving in the midst of danger, come God, bring wisdom and guidance.

To Elizabeth, our Queen, and all the Royal Household, come, God our Sovereign Lord, bring strength, bring health, and bring peace.

On this Remembrance Sunday, we also pray for the families and friends of those who are currently deployed, waiting and watching so anxiously at home.

And we pray that your Holy Spirit, might strengthen all who strive to ease tension, maintain peace, and resolve conflict around Your world today.

***When you go home tell them of us and say - For your tomorrow we gave our today.***

In all our prayers, spoken or silent, we offer them in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Hymn CH4 485 – Dear Lord and Father of mankind,

### **Prayer of Approach and the Lord's Prayer**

We clear our heads, we still our hearts and we come before God in prayer, let us pray;

Gracious God, our Loving Heavenly father, You are our refuge and in You we find shelter and safety. You are our redeemer and in you we find forgiveness and freedom.

As we come before you this morning, we give you thanks and praise for all the different ways in which we may approach you and for the variety of ways in which You reach out to us.

Whatever our age and stage in the journey of life and faith. Whatever our role in congregation or in wider community, we give thanks that we can come before You as part of the family of Your people in this place and worship you O Lord, our Refuge and Redeemer.

Today we pray as the Psalmist prayed that our words and thoughts may be acceptable to You and not just what we think and what we say but what we also do.

For we confess Father, that all too often our thoughts, words and actions are far from being acceptable to You, or to each other, or even to ourselves. As we recall some of the ways in which we fall short of the standard you have set for us in the example of Jesus, we pray that you will have mercy on us and forgive us...

Help us today, Lord God, to remember the standard set for us by Jesus and the promises we have made to follow Him. Help us to remember that those same standards and promises apply not just whilst we are sat in Church but should spill out into our daily lives and the life of our community.

At home, at work, at University, College or School, wherever we are and whatever we do, may our words and thoughts be acceptable to you our God and Redeemer. May all that we do show us to be members of the family of Your people in this place.

On this day, as we commemorate and commend those who lived and died in the service of others, helps us to remember that your purposes for us are good. That you gave your Son, Jesus, for the life of this world, and that you lead us by the Holy Spirit into paths of righteousness and peace.

For all this we pray through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who taught us when we pray together to say; Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive others that sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**Reading: Matthew 25: 1 – 13 (taken from the Good News Translation)**

**The Parable of the Ten Young Women**

**25** “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. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and the other five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them, <sup>4</sup> while the wise ones took containers full of oil for their lamps. <sup>5</sup> The bridegroom was late in coming, so they began to nod and fall asleep. <sup>6</sup> “It was already midnight when the cry rang out, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come and meet him!’ <sup>7</sup> The ten young women woke up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> Then the foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Let us have some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> ‘No, indeed,’ the wise ones answered, ‘there is not enough for you and for us. Go to the store and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> “Later the others arrived. ‘Sir, sir! Let us in!’ they cried out. <sup>12</sup> ‘Certainly not! I don't know you,’ the bridegroom answered.”

<sup>13</sup> And Jesus concluded, “Watch out, then, because you do not know the day or the hour.

## **Sermon – ‘Ready and Responsive’**

One of the greatest privileges I have as a Church of Scotland Minister is the ability to conduct weddings. From the first meeting with a couple, to the planning of the words to be said, the music to be played and the hymns to be sung – to the big day itself, when the service takes place in a church, a country house or a hotel, each has been a humbling experience and each one has had something that makes it stand out. That makes it memorable.

Let me briefly give you some examples. The first wedding that I conducted was during the August of 2009. I was as big a bag of nerves as the couple were that day. Do not get me wrong, I was prepared but panic stricken that I would make a mistake, thus ruining the couple’s big day. I have also conducted a wedding where the groom had a more than passing resemblance for American actor Ben Stiller.

One wedding had a Scottish/Australian theme, where the wedding meal was an ‘Aussie Barbie’. Another wedding was held on a beach on the Ayrshire coast on a cloudy day. At another wedding, the Groom had to be kept calm as the Bride was 50 minutes late. There was the £10,000 firework display at one and finally a wedding where the iPad didn’t work properly so the Minister led an unaccompanied rendition of ‘You lift me up, so I can stand on mountains’.

As I said earlier, each wedding, in its own way, has been memorable. Yet, as each wedding came around, I knew that everyone that was taking part was well prepared. I knew that they were ready. As we turn to our reading for today, we find there a memorable wedding, where preparation appears to be key and yet we are also talking about what you may call ‘the end times.’

This happens at this time every year in our lectionary cycle. The readings take on a decidedly apocalyptic tone as one Church year draws to a close and another begins on the First Sunday of Advent. Jesus is talking about the end times, and not just the end of the age or the end of the world. In fact, Jesus is talking about His own end times. For, this story takes place on either the Tuesday or Wednesday of Holy Week. Just a day or two before Jesus will celebrate His last meal with His Disciples, on the very night when He will be handed over to those who will kill Him.

Jesus knows this. There is danger in the air, and He can smell it. He is going away to face and torture and death. Now, there is something we all need to understand about all four of the Gospels. The story is always taking place on at least two different levels.

On one level, we have the story itself: this is the last week of Jesus' earthly life. Yet, there is another level; the level on which the writer of Matthew's Gospel already knows the ending of the story. The Gospel writers know, that by the power of God, Jesus will defeat death – that He will be raised and live – but then He will be taken up into Heaven and out of their sight.

So, on both levels, people are grappling with living in a time when they believe they do not have Jesus in their midst. Which leads them to wonder, 'what shall we do while Jesus is gone?' Why? Because there is an assumption that He will return. We proclaim every time we say the Apostle's creed together. After witnessing to the Good News of the resurrection and of Jesus' presence in Heaven with God, we say, *'He will come again to judge the living and the dead.'*

So, what shall we do whilst Jesus is gone? How shall we await His return? Well, that is the question before us today. In response, Jesus presents this enigmatic parable by way of an answer. There are ten bridesmaids... ladies, literally, in waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom. Five of them are wise and the other five are foolish. The five prudent bridesmaids have all obtained oil for their lamps – lamps used to welcome the guest of honour. The foolish bridesmaids have no oil. They are unready when the bridegroom arrives, and instead of welcoming him joyously, they must scramble around and find a merchant to buy their oil at the last minute.

What shall we do whilst Jesus is gone? How shall we await His return? The answer, according to the parable, is this: 'get ready and be responsive'. How do we do that exactly? Well, we make sure we have oil in our lamp. What is oil? Oil is used in Scripture in a myriad of ways. This parable shows us one common use for it as fuel for lamps. This little light of the bridesmaids, they can only let it shine, if they have enough oil. Oil makes possible light into the darkness.

Another common use for oil has to do with cooking. The Scriptures are full of simple recipes for bread, stew, roasted lamb, and oil is often the most important of ingredients because oil makes food taste delicious.

The Psalms are filled with images of oil. Psalm 23 – *'you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows'*. Psalm 104 – *'we rejoice in wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine.'* Psalm 133 – *'kindred living together in unity are like precious oil upon the head.'* These are just a few images of well-being, of joyful company, of hospitality. Oil is a sign of welcome.

Oil is also used throughout the Scriptures as a mean of setting something or someone aside for a special office or purpose. David is plucked from a pasture where he is tending sheep and a horn of oil is poured over his head, making him Israel's rightful king. Oil is used to not only to anoint Aaron and the other priests, but also as a way of consecrating certain offerings. Oil is a sign of holiness, which is another way of saying, wholeheartedness for God. Oil is a sign of being set apart for God's designs.

All of these uses for oil begin to suggest something to us – someone to us – and as we consider the name by which we call Jesus – 'Christ' – it finally all comes together. Christ – which means Messiah – which means, anointed one. Jesus is the anointed One. Could the oil possibly be Christ?

Jesus is telling His listeners that He must go away. Yet, as we wait for Him to return, we need Him to help us get ready for His return. We need Jesus to teach us. We need Him to mold us. We need Him to prepare us, so that we are ready to welcome Him back. It sounds like a bottomless paradox that is full of mind-bending twists.

Yet, when you think about it, this parable is really a beautiful paradox. We need Christ, Whom we call the light of the world, and who assures us that we are the light of the world. We need Christ, Who feeds and nourishes us, and Who needs us to feed and nourish one another. We need Christ, Who make all people welcome, and so we welcome all in His name ... thereby welcoming Him. We need Christ the whole-hearted One, Who urges us to be whole-heartedly for God. We need Christ, if we are going to keep our lamps shining, if we are going to be ready and responsive.

Whether we live in Jesus' end times or in our own, there is work to be done in this world and within our congregation, and we need Christ to help us to accomplish it. For, you and I are called to be light for the darkness. To be nourishment and welcome for the stranger. To be whole-heartedly for God's purposes. With Jesus in our midst we can keep our lamps burning and be ready for, and responsive to, the great celebration.

So, as our times of worship heads towards its conclusion for today, I wonder, are you ready? Are you ready for the Bridegroom to appear? Are you ready to meet him face to face? Are you ready for the most memorable of weddings?

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



## **Prayer of Dedication and for Ourselves and Others**

We unite our hearts again in prayer, let us pray;

We give because we have received. We have received because the Lord is generous. We give because You are worthy. You give because You are Lord. We give out of what we hold. You overwhelm us by Your abundance. Lord God receive all we are and use it for the glory of your name.

When we remember ... lives etched as shadows on broken walls following nuclear fission and the fractured bones of a common humanity: tell us of Your new heavens and new earth.

When we see ... oil fields burning in the desert, clouding any hope of ordinary living, turning days of opportunity to nights of fear: tell us of Your new heavens and new earth.

When we hear of ... young lives lost by the thousand and forests turned to wasteland to capture a dozen yards of land: tell us of Your new heavens and new earth.

When our instinct tells us ... to reject, rather than welcome diversity because we have too well learned the lessons of terror: tell us of Your new heavens and new earth.

When we watch ... athletes compete with strength and skill in ways which conquer war-caused injury: tell us of Your new heavens and new earth.

When we despair ... and think that nothing changes and no hope is real, or that peace is too elusive and too fragile to survive: tell us of Your new heavens and new earth and of Your Son: victim of violence, sentenced to die, risen from death the first fruits of Your new heaven and new earth.

And now Gracious God, this is the time for new songs, fresh praise on instruments played with joy. For our God has shown His faithfulness, our God has once more made love known.

Not for us timid days of fearful quiet. Unsure of what is to come. Clinging to a “rose-tinted” age long past. The sea is shouting, the hills are crying out. The whole earth praises God – and so do we. For God is here, present across the earth: and God has shown His faithfulness. Our God has once more made love known.

You call us Gracious God, to sing Your song, to demonstrate justice, to embody your peace to praise your Name with all our strength, all of our lives; and to rejoice in what we have come to know: that God has shown His faithfulness. Our God has once more made love known. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn CH4 519 – Love divine, all loves excelling,

**Benediction**

We go now from this time of worship with our lamps burning. We go now to live, to love and to serve. May the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Spirit, be upon you and all whom you love, this day and forevermore. Amen.