

Sermon 2017-11-12 - Year A - Pentecost 11-9 - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas  
Amos 5:18–24; Psalm 70; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Matthew 25:1–13

### **Intro - Armed Forces Readiness**

- “Within hours of an early morning call on January 7, thousands of paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division swarmed Fort Bragg...to draw a rifle, don a parachute and prepare for a simulated combat jump into Europe as part of a deployment readiness exercise. The exercise, conducted quarterly, tests the paratroopers' ability to deploy rapidly from Fort Bragg to anywhere in the world on short notice for combat or humanitarian operations. Once a notice is given, paratroopers are required to be ready in as little as 18 hours as part of the Global Response Force.”<sup>1</sup>
- It is amazing a reassuring to see the dedication and responsiveness of our armed forces as they defend our nation and preserve the freedoms we all enjoy!

### **Wise and Foolish Virgins**

- The virgins in this parable are essentially bridesmaids or wedding attendants.
- The wedding feast is often used by Jesus and the prophets as an image of heaven.
- The Bridegroom is delayed in coming and takes longer than expected.
- Some of the virgins are prepared for the delay and bring extra oil with them.
- Other virgins are surprised by the delay and don't bring enough oil to last to that late hour of arrival.
- Those who are prepared enter into the feast when the time comes.
- Those who are not prepared must go to the store to buy oil and are locked out when they return.

### **Ready for the Second Coming or Death**

- If Jesus returned right now, would you be ready to greet him?
- Imagine that scene that is described in our reading from 1 Thessalonians today. The sound of that trumpet will be a joyous one for those who are in Christ, but it will be fearful for those who are not walking with him.
- “What a warning! It tells us that it is all too possible to be often in church and in Christian company and yet be a stranger to the Holy Spirit. It is possible to have a lamp that looks good, but has no oil in it. It is possible that one day Jesus may have to say, ‘I never knew you’ (7:23). All that is a great surprise to churchgoers, in Matthew’s day and ours.”<sup>2</sup>
- Church shooting last weekend at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, TX. The attack began shortly after worship began at 11am. 26 people died. First two funerals happened yesterday.
- James 4:13-14 - you are a mist
- There is no time like the present to get right with the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/01/07/soldiers-fort-bragg-train-short-notice-deployments.html>

<sup>2</sup> Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (The Bible Speaks Today; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 260–261.

## Ready for Mission

- Acts 16:9-12 - Paul called to Macedonia
- Keeping aware of the culture around us so that we can speak into it.
  - *Canoeing the Mountains* Lewis and Clark were looking for a water passage to the Pacific and all was going well until they hit the Rockies.
- 1 Peter 3:14-15 “always being prepared to make a defense...”
  - Not always prepared to answer any theological or biblical question that might come up, but prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you.
  - You are witnesses of what Christ has done in your lives.

## How do we get ready?

- The United States Navy is a powerhouse. The fleet consists of roughly 430 ships in active service or reserve. The vessels run the gamut from the massive Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, which stretches more than 1,000 feet, to the Los Angeles-class submarine that slithers 900 feet below the ocean surface.<sup>3</sup>
- Only about a third (95) of these ships are deployed at any one time. The rest are stationed in the continental US and are either running training missions or are in port for maintenance.
- Regular maintenance for Christians includes the regular habits or spiritual disciplines that help us to remain connected to God.
  - This includes prayer, reading scripture, and regular participation in worship and reception of communion, and regular confession of our sins to God.
  - These habits help us to abide in Christ and they keep us ready to receive him whenever he comes (either through our own death or his second coming).
- Training for Christians includes the learning of new things and the sharpening of our skills.
  - This includes Bible study (alone and in groups), Bible memorization, learning new ministry skills, and honing our testimonies.
  - These activities help us to be ready to minister to others whenever the Holy Spirit prompts us to do so.
- Deployment is where we actually go out and put these ministry skills to work!
- Collectively, these areas of maintenance, training, and deployment are what we mean by the term “discipleship.” This is a core piece of what we do at Good Samaritan: Welcoming Neighbors | Discipling Believers.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.popularmechanics.com/military/navy-ships/a15297/us-navy-entire-fleet/>