

**32<sup>nd</sup> Sun A...**  
**A Lamp Burning**

**Introduction...**

This Sunday's Gospel tells an interesting story about wise and foolish people.

Do you know any wise people?

What makes them wise?

Do you know any foolish people?

What makes them foolish?

In the story that Jesus tells today, the wise are those who plan well and are prepared just in case things don't go right.

The foolish are people who don't plan too well, and are caught unawares.

We hear commercials all of the time about wise financial planning – we are advised to plan ahead to assure our future financial security... and that's good worldly wisdom.

But I don't think that's what Jesus was talking about.

Let's take a look at what Jesus was advising us to do.

**Refrain... If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

**I Waiting**

The story that Jesus tells describes a group of women awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom – this was traditional at the time of Jesus.

These women would then accompany the bridegroom to the house of the bride.

There was no set time for the bridegroom to arrive – they didn't have watches or cell phones or tight schedules in those days. And so the people waited.

We know the "rest of the story."

What does this story mean for us?

This story of Jesus is placed in the section of Mathew's Gospel, which speaks about the second coming of Jesus... the end of the world.

Jesus doesn't give a lot of specifics.

As a matter of fact, Jesus himself didn't know when that would be... unlike some preachers over the course of history who predicted the exact time, only to be proved wrong.

In the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mathew –in the chapter just before the story we looking at today – Jesus says,  
*As for the exact day or hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father only.*

So...Mathew placed Jesus' story of the women waiting in the section about the Second Coming of Jesus.

The purpose of the story is to tell the followers of Jesus to be prepared for Jesus', the Bridegroom's, coming...

because Jesus the Bridegroom *will* come to take us home to enjoy the kingdom of heaven...

which Jesus frequently describes as a wedding feast

where people will enjoy Jesus the Bridegroom,

and God, the Father of the Bridegroom,

and the Spirit of Love...

the heavenly feast at the Banquet of Life and Love.

That's what we're waiting for, we disciples of Jesus...

we wait for this even in our own day.

**Refrain... If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

## **II Problem**

Of course, there is a slight problem...

We disciples of Jesus sometimes – perhaps most times –  
forget that we're waiting.

We forget that we are on a pilgrimage.

We get so caught up in this world that we act as if this is all there is.

The poet Wordsworth said,

*The world is too much with us.*

Our hearts get cluttered with too many things...

We're like amnesiacs who have forgotten where we came from and where  
we're going.

TV, commercials, movies, CD's, modern music, sports, magazines, game  
boxes – you name it...

all of this "stuff" tempts us to forget...

And we have so many things to worry about too.

What do you spend time worrying about?

All of this fosters our amnesia. We forget...

## **Where did we come from?**

A meaningless universe evolving... toward what?

## **Where are we going?**

To school, to work, towards marriage, towards a career, to retirement and playing golf or painting the house... then what?

To die? Then what?

**Refrain... If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Our Christian *story* is different...

(and remember, we are a people of stories...)

**We know that we came from God's loving hands.**

**We look at this life as a pilgrimage.**

We walk in the footsteps of Jesus,  
and therefore our two greatest signposts,  
and map coordinates along the way of our pilgrimage are what Jesus told us...

*Love God with our whole heart*

*with your soul,*

*with all your strength,*

*and all your mind;*

*and love your neighbor as yourself... Luke 10:27*

**The end of our pilgrimage...**

the Wedding Banquet in our heavenly home.

How often we amnesiacs forget this.

For too many in our culture today,

this world is our only home,

and our personal happiness and security is the be all and the end all.

*But that's not how we disciples of Jesus understand our lives.*

*That's not our story!*

**Refrain... If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

### **III Oil in Our Lamps**

This world, our world, is important and good and worthwhile...

but it's not our lasting home... that's the message of Jesus.

And now we disciples of Jesus await the return of the Bridegroom,

*and we need to keep our lamps burning brightly...*

What's that about?

Our lamps burning brightly refer to our living out the message of Jesus,

our loving God and our neighbor,

our trying to walk in Jesus footsteps,

and follow His ideals and teachings.

Our lives are not about worshipping at the altar of envy and greed,

doing whatever it takes to make a fortune,

or manipulating others for our own pleasure or sense of control.

We are challenged to keep our lamps burning brightly –

we carry the light of Christ in our world today...

Remember... It's not *who* we are... it's *whose* we are.

We belong to Christ. We are Christ's disciples.

We are people who *choose life*,

who try to love and be compassionate to others....

Jesus taught in Mt 25,

Feed the hungry,

clothe the naked,

visit the sick,

reach out a helping hand when we can...

Just look at the life of Jesus... Jesus is our model.

Remember the Prayer of St. Francis.

May I share one story?

**Story... The Wise Man and The Bandit**

*Once upon a time there was a very wise man who was on his way to a village on the other side of the mountain to teach, to beg, and to call more disciples to follow his way. He intended to take a shortcut over the mountain pass to save time. But immediately the people and his friends said, "No, don't go that way. The pass is filled with bandits lying in wait for you and if they find you don't have money or jewels they will kill you brutally.*

*The wise man couldn't be bothered with such warnings, and he continued on his way. Well, no sooner had he climbed high into the pass when a notorious bandit appeared, bearing down on him with sword in hand and shouting, "Your money or your life!"*

*The wise man looked up at the man astride his horse, pulled out his empty pockets and said, "I guess it's my life, since I have no money."*

*As the bandit moved toward him, sword in motion, the wise man stopped him in his tracks: "You know the rules. If you take my life, then you must at least grant me a last wish!"*

*The bandit stopped. "Alright. What do you want? Make it quick old man."*

*The wise man said, "My wish is simple and has two parts. First, see that great tree over there and the limb that extends far out over the path? Cut it off!" The bandit grinned and in seconds the limb lay on the ground. "Alright old man, what is the second part?"*

*The wise man turned toward him and said very quietly and steadily, "Now put it back on again."*

*The bandit was speechless and then started laughing uproariously. "You are the stupidest man I've ever met! No one can put a limb back on a tree after it's been cut off! Insane! You're idiotic."*

*The wise man looked at him and said, "I am not the one who is stupid. You are. Anyone can destroy. Any child without knowledge can cut things up. Anyone can main, kill, mutilate and undo reality. It takes no power or intelligence whatsoever."*

*The bandit was caught off guard. The wise man continued, "What takes power, real power, is to be able to heal, to bring life, to restore, to stand in the breach, to undo the evil and the destruction that you've done in the past. That takes real power, imagination, and creativity. What you've done takes nothing at all. Anyone can do what you've done."*

*They eyed each other for a long time. Then the bandit got off of his horse, laid down his sword at the wise man's feet, knelt in respect before him, and humbly asked, "Teach me that kind of power."*

**Refrain... To you Yahweh I lift up my soul, O my God.**

**Conclusion...**

Let us bow our heads and pray...

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,

help me to walk in your footsteps each day,

as I await your return to take me home.

Help me not to forget.

Unclutter my heart.

Fill me with the oil of your Body and Blood,

your Word and teaching and example

at this Mass,

so that I can await your return in faithfulness,

and keep the lamp of my life giving light to my world

every day.

Amen.

**Refrain... To you Yahweh I lift up my soul, O my God.**