

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Prelude

Welcome

- > Welcome, St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Ottawa
We are a caring community of faith in the heart of the Glebe.
—> Paul Wu, minister, worship leader
- > Christmas Fayre, Nov 18, this coming Saturday
—> call for volunteers, please talk to Kaye
- > December 17, a service of baptism, confirmation,
reception of new members
- > Territorial Acknowledgement

Call to Worship

One: Let us praise the God of Truth!

All: Hallelujah! We seek God's truth.

One: Let us praise the God of Peace!

All: Hallelujah! We seek God's peace.

One: Let us praise the God of Love!

**All: Hallelujah! In Christ we know God's love
and so we offer our praise!**

Hymn 655 Give me oil in my lamp

Children's Story

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Prayer of Adoration

Transforming God, you take the night and give us day.
You take our strife and give us peace.
You take our sadness and give us joy.
You take our fear and give us courage.
You take death and give us new life.
O God, you give and you give and you give.
So we come to praise you and offer our love and loyalty,
as your willing servants in the name of Christ,
who enriches our lives with grace.
And in the power of the Spirit who prays within us,
when we cannot find the right words to honour you.

Unison Prayer of Confession

**Trusting God,
you placed your mission in our hands and gave us gifts
to accomplish amazing things in Jesus' name.
We confess sometimes we've taken credit
for what your love has done.
Sometimes we've called our own desires your will.
Sometimes we've stepped back
and gripe about not getting enough credit.
Forgive us when we've failed to honour your trust in us.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father who art 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 debts as
we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and
the glory, forever. Amen**

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ –
and Christ died for us; Christ rose for us,
Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us.

So trust God's promise.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and given a new start
by God's generous grace.

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
 Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Scripture (Bonaventure)

First Reading 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- > Apocalyptic text, revealing to us the mysteries of the last days, what what is yet to come
- > Thessalonians passage: resurrection
- > Matthew 25: coming Kingdom of God

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Psalm 78:1-7 (with refrain 1)

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 the Lord
and the mighty wonders that God has done.
 The Lord established a decree in Jacob
 and appointed a law in Israel,

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
 Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

which God commanded our ancestors
 to teach to their children,
**that the next generation might know them,
 the children yet unborn,
 and rise up and tell them to their children,
 so that they should set their hope in God,
 and not forget the works of God,
 but keep God's commandments;**

Second Reading Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women 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 young women 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 young women 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.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord
 People: **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn 704 Teach me, God, to wonder

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts
be acceptable to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

A classic article published by the Time magazine in 1988,
looks into the virtue of sharing,
and its corresponding opposite, that is selfishness.

Specifically, the study looks at the market of videocassette recorder,
dominated then by Sony, with JVC as the upstart.
Here is a quote from the article,

”The company had made a crucial mistake.
While at first Sony kept its Beta technology mostly to itself,
JVC, the Japanese inventor of the VHS (format),
shared its secret with a a raft of other firms.
As a result, the market was overwhelmed
by the sheer volume of the VHS machines being produced.”

We all know what happened next,
JVC’s business model of sharing
drastically undercut Sony’s market share.

The first year, Sony lost 40 percent of the market,
and by 1987 it controlled only 10 percent overall.
Realizing its mistake,
Sony reluctantly embraced the VHS format.

While it continued to make Beta-format VCRs,
Sony’s move according to Time,
will likely send Beta machines to
“the consumer-electronics graveyard.”

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Selfishness did not pay.

Sharing, as it turns out, is a virtue,
even in a cut-throat business environment—
a lesson learned that would be applied
again and again by other companies,
in other fields.

Sharing is a virtue that is taught to us by our parents,
and we then have passed it down to our children
(or at least I hope you have).
Sharing is caring.

The inclination to share is triggered by
the empathetic self that recognizes the lack in others,
and is then fuelled by
the compassionate self to meet that lack.

Sharing, empathy and compassion are all virtues
that are infectious—that is the more we share,
the more others would be moved to share.

This virtuous cycle is what sustains a community,
what makes the global humanity work.

So why then is the Bible seemingly teaching us ‘not to share’,
in this week’s Lectionary reading,
in the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids of Matthew 25?

The Parable, taught by Jesus,
is simple enough at the first glance.
Ten young women took their lamps
and went out to meet with the bridegroom.

Five went prepared, bringing extra oil with them.
The other five, the so called foolish ones did not.
The bridegroom was delayed and all of them fell asleep.

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

So by midnight, the wedding party arrived finally.

But the foolish five found themselves unprepared, lacking oil.

They reached out to ask those five with extra oil to share,
but was rebuffed, and was told to

“go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves”.

While they were away, presumedly out buying oil,

the bridegroom came and welcomed the lamp-ready five
into the wedding banquet.

Later, the other five, supposedly back with oil-ready lamp,
came and knocked on the door,

but was rebuffed again, this time by the bridegroom saying,
“Truly I tell you, I do not know you.”

Truly I tell you, it is a cringe-worthy parable

that makes one wanting to shake that bridegroom,
and questioning him, “Where is your humanity?
What justice is this?”

Is Jesus teaching us ‘not to share’?

I don’t think so, at least I hope not!

The backdrop of this parable is the coming Kingdom of God.

We know this because Jesus opens the parable, in verse 1,
with “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this.”

The point of this parable is to be ready for the coming Kingdom.

We know this because Jesus closes the parable, in verse 13,
with “Keep awake, therefore, for you know
neither the day nor the hour.”

The key to discern this parable

is to understand what an oil-ready lamp represents.

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

In Exodus 27, and also in Leviticus 24,
Moses was told by God to lay out a very specific
perpetual ordinance to be observed by the Israelites
through all generations—that is
to set up a lamp outside the tent of meeting.

They were to bring pure oil of beaten olives for the light.
Aaron and his sons, that is the priestly class,
shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord.

This light shall represent the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle,
and it shall be kept burning regularly, continuously—
a perpetual, everlasting flame.

So the best way to understand what an oil-ready lamp means,
is to see it as the presence of God in each one of us.
That presence is the Spirit of God.
It is not a commodity, like oil, that can be readily be
bought, sold, traded or shared.
It can only be cultivated, individually
from within.

How then does one cultivate the presence of God from within?
Let me share with you this story.

Several centuries ago,
a Japanese emperor commissioned an artist to paint a bird.
A number of months passed, then several years,
and still no painting was brought to the palace.

Finally the emperor became so exasperated
that he went to the artist's home to demand an explanation.
Instead of making excuses,
the artist placed a blank canvas on the easel.

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
 Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

In less than an hour,
 he completed a painting that was to become
 a brilliant masterpiece.

When the emperor asked the reason for the delay,
 the artist showed him armloads of drawings
 of feathers, wings, heads, and feet.
 He then explained that all of this research and study
 had been necessary
 before he could complete the painting.

Translating that to the context of faith,
 all that we do in the community of faith, in bible study,
 in quiet devotion, in public worship and private prayers,
 in committee meetings, in acts of charity,
 in songs of praise, or visiting the shut-ins.

All these are necessary preparations
 that cultivate from deep within a sense of the divine,
 an oil-ready lamp,
 allowing the Spirit of God to manifest
 into a brilliant masterpiece.

For the time is coming, and has come,
 the Kingdom of God is near and is here.
 No one knows the hour or the day
 when that final consummation will happens,
 but we know it will happens in a blink of an eye.

Meanwhile, the community of faith is called upon to wait.
 This wait is not a passive do-nothing wait,
 but an active cultivating wait.

We can still share, not the actual presence of God,
 but sharing in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

We share out of empathy, out of compassion.

We share out of the realization that people
hungers for meaning, and thirsts for belonging.

We share out of the realization that the world we live in is broken,
and communities and individuals are all in need
of healing and reconciliation.

We share out of humbleness, like fellow beggars

who happen to have stumble up food and water,
and are more than willing to point to others
where to find this heavenly bread and living fountain.

We share out of a conviction that it is God who first loved us,
and shared with us a part of the God-self,

that is God the Father sharing with the humanity
the only begotten Son of God, who came to the world
to save sinners like you and I.

Further more God continues to share with us the Spirit of God,
that forms the community of faith,
that sustains all that we do in the name of Jesus.

For without such a sharing that binds us,
we would be all like chaffs, blown by the wind.

For without such a sharing that empowers us,
we would be all like empty vessels running on fume.

God loves so we love.

God shares so we could.

For that we give thanks.

The only question left to ask is this:

Is your lamp oil-ready?

If you are not too sure, let's have a talk.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Prayers of the People

God of all life and each life,
We thank you that you are with us every day,
in each challenge and opportunity.
In our weakness, you are strength.
In our confusion, you light the path ahead.
In our questions, you offer wisdom for our choices.
Stay with us in these days when so much seems uncertain,
be the light in us, be our oil-ready lamp,
So we can serve you faithfully, as we are able.

God of loving kindness:
Thank you for each moment of joy and celebration in our lives:
for love given and received,
for friendships which bring meaning and happiness,
even from a distance,
and for family members who show us
glimpses of unconditional love.
In all our relationships and interactions,
keep us mindful of your call to see you in each another.

God of the nations,
we worry for the world filled with conflict and division,
when the earth itself is put at risk by destructive human actions.
Guide diplomats and politicians to look beyond short term interests,
and keep the well-being of vulnerable people
and the planet in focus.
Open our leaders' minds and hearts with wisdom
to develop more equitable ways of ordering our common life.

God of healing:
we pray for those who are suffering in these days
when winter is closing in.
Draw close to all who fear the future.
Comfort those with pain or problems that seem overwhelming.

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Shine the light of your love into our sadness and sorrows
and show us how to comfort and support each other.

God of life:

We thank you for your saints of every age
who continue to inspire us,
and for all who have meant the world to us
and now live with you.

Keep us in communion with them
and, at the last, bring us all to dwell together in your light.
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen.**

Hymn 749 Be still my soul

Passing of the Peace

Announcements

Offering (invitation)

In the Church that bears Christ's name,
we receive the legacy of faithfulness
offered to us across many generations.
A case in point is the generosity of Margaret Armstrong,
as noted in today's announcement.
Our gifts continue to build up the inheritance we share in
for generations we will never meet,
so that they will meet Jesus and reach out to others in his name.

Doxology (Hymn 830)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

Sermon Title: An Oil-Ready Lamp
Place & Date: St. Giles, Ottawa, Nov 12, 2023

Prayer of Dedication

Faithful God, we offer humble thanks today for your generosity to us through the Church that bears Christ's name.
Receive our gifts as tokens of our love and loyalty.
Use them to sustain the mission of the Church
in ways we cannot yet imagine,
in a future that you are creating
through Christ Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn 748 Lord of all hopefulness (to the tune of #461)

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all. **Amen.**

Postlude