

The Best Way to Watch for Jesus' Return is to Do

"What do we do, when Christ doesn't return as soon as we thought he would?" the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander asked in his November 9 sermon.

"One lens through which we look to get an answer to that question is this parable we know as the parable of the bridesmaids, or parable of the ten virgins," he continued.

People in the first century Near East didn't keep time as we do, he said, and they understood that a bridegroom might be late, by hours or even into the next day, and one role of the bridesmaids was to light the way, when he came, from the bride's house to the groom's.

In this parable, as in the Sermon on the Mount, the question is whether the King or the Groom will say to us, "I never knew you." That suggests that we will be known, when Christ returns, by whether we are busy doing what Jesus did.

Risky Exercise of Faith and Love Keeps Us Safe

The O.T. lesson's proclamation of terror and wrath, the Psalm's sharp turn to the theme of judgment, the Epistle's forecast of disaster when everything was seeming safe, and Jesus' parable about the three servants' use of their master's money are "uncomfortable", but we may as well, in faith, "jump in with both feet." Epworth's guest preacher, the Rev. Lori Ward, said Sunday.

"Jesus teaches that the only way to be safe--to protect our lives--is to lay them on the line. . . . The invitation of Jesus to us this morning is . . . a call to be good stewards of the Gospel He has entrusted to us, not to bury the Good News in the ground or even to keep it safe in our cozy community," but to invest it wisely "in the lives of others". For those who embrace the risk of discipleship," there is celebration, not wrath, to come.

We Seek Renewal and Transformation Through Use of Means of Grace

"We are a church in the Wesleyan-Anglican tradition, whose goal is to proclaim a vision of the Christian life that enables persons to be renewed in God's image through the disciplined use of the means of grace, including the liturgy, the sacraments, and living in time through the Church Year," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his "State of the Church" address Sunday during the annual meeting.

"We teach and preach that God's grace is sufficient not merely to forgive us of our sins, but also to radically transform us and to make us more like Christ," he said.

"Epworth is a great church, not because of its minister, but because of its people. . . . Great pastors do not make great churches; great churches make great pastors." He cited efforts undertaken this year to educate, serve, and evangelize.



"Christ in Glory", painted 1736-8 by Pompeo Batoni and now on view at The Getty Center of Los Angeles. Image: www.getty.edu. This Sunday will be Christ the King Sunday, and we will hear from the prophet Daniel, "I saw someone who looked like a man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world . . . His kingdom will never be destroyed."

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Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

For the poor: Meat; fresh produce; canned fruits and vegetables; dairy products; peanut butter; cooking oil; pancake mix; syrup; spices; diapers; baby wipes; bathroom tissue; for personal care: soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream; new underwear (adults and children); warm clothing and socks; umbrellas; cleaning supplies; bleach.



Readings, 11/23: Dan. 7:9-14; Ps. 93; Col. 1:11-20; John 18:33-37. **11/30:** Is. 64:1-9; Ps. 80:1-7; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; Mark 13:24-37.

Prayer Emphases: Turkey; Worldwide Church of God; Centerpointe Church, Greenville, SC, and the Rev. Bryan Parris; The Rutherford Institute; parishioners on Chestnut Drive.

Left: "Christ the King", a detail from the Ghent altarpiece by Jan van Eyck. Unlike so many feast days, Christ the King Sunday is of comparatively recent origin, having been proclaimed in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. On this day we acknowledge that Christ is King over all Creation, that all mankind must submit to Christ's rule, and that Christ transforms culture, rather than that culture transforms Christianity.