

“Just Showing Up Doesn’t get the Job Done”
Pentecost 25

“and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet”

The legendary John Wayne was the greatest cowboy-actor of all. Wayne’s cowboys not only looked good but they were good. In “Rio Bravo,” Waynes’ character summed up his cowboy philosophy to his sidekick, “Just showing up doesn’t get the job done!”

The parable of the ten bridesmaids emphasizes a similar lesson for the Christian today: It takes more than good intentions to be a faithful member of Jesus’ church. In fact being a disciple of Jesus demands a commitment to eight crucial words that can change your life:

Show Up, Be Attentive, Be Prepared, and Go In.

Show Up. Someone once said that 90% of success is just showing up. The worst thing we can do to our spiritual lives is fail to show up for those God moments he gives in our lives. In the gospel parable the event is a wedding banquet. It actually could be many other things as well. Remember that the parable has a futuristic twist to it pointing to the kingdom of God.

How many opportunities do we get to grow in our faith? How many of us have taken time to serve through our outreach programs? How many still have taken time to pray for our youth at Happening next weekend? Or wrote an encouraging word of hope for their weekend? How many of us are aware of a vacancy on our vestry and would be willing to fill it?

Showing up may not mean our heart is into what God has for us. We may not have asked God to make us aware through prayer what is needful nor what should be our treasure!

Be Attentive. Unless we are alert to the other ten percent after showing up to a God moment, we may simply miss out by falling asleep. The five foolish bridesmaids were not alert to the needful things required for their journey to the wedding banquet. Perhaps they did not know the way to the festivities. At least the five wise maids knew enough to bring oil for their lamps so they could see their way for their journey at night. Sleeping was neither the problem nor the issue. The wait for the bridegroom's procession was longer than they expected just as it is as the church waits for Jesus second coming. Falling asleep was to be expected. They would hear the groom coming. Following him into the banquet

would be another matter. BE ATTENTIVE. BE PRESENT IN THE MOMENT GOD HAS GIVEN. BE AWARE THAT YOU CANNOT SEE JESUS, THE GROOM, WITHOUT THE LIGHT AND ITS PROVISIONS. BE PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR LOVE FOR HIM.

Being attentive to one's surroundings is challenging and can make us seem foolish. Albert Einstein was famous for his powers of concentration. At one dinner party in Princeton, the after-dinner discussion kept going all night until finally Einstein got up and said apologetically, "I hate to do this, but I must put you out now because I have got to be on campus tomorrow morning."

"Albert," his host said, "you are in my house."

Be Prepared. At a recent altar guild meeting one of our ladies suggested that the wick on the votive candles we use at our Madonna Shrine be trimmed before being used and be cleaned of metal left over from other candles. Why? Untrimmed wicks lead to burnout. A wildly burning wick can burn unevenly, heat the glass in the votive and cause it to crack!

Preparation caused the foolish bridesmaids to be left behind. They were in a rush to get to

the party without proper provisions for their journey. The bridegroom came when they least expected. Jesus comes for his church when they least expect it – at night. The Night makes it harder to see where we are going. The Night makes animals and people easy prey to the dangers and darkness of the world.

Watching, vigilance and active prevention are all a part of the duties of the Christian. When the light burns out it is so much harder to find someone to help when surrounded by darkness.

The vigils of this past week reminded us of the confrontation with fear and evil at All Hallows Eve. The next day the church celebrates at All Saints Day the testimony of prophets, sages and martyrs whose sainthood we acknowledge as having overcome this world of fear and evil. And we remember the death of All Souls following, as we celebrate their faithful service to God. These days remind us to be prepared! To be ready! We know not the hour of Jesus' return.

Go in. Finally with the wise maids we find our way to the party along the path cut for us by Jesus the groom. The gate is still open to the wise maids but was shut to the maids who had not kept their lamps trimmed and burning. They

were out of oil and in the darkness they came when no one would recognize who they were. The tragedy of the foolish maidens is that they miss out on the party – the joy and exuberance of being in the presence of the groom. Without the groom it is a lifeless party. The returned presence of Jesus is no dull party! God wants all he invites to this party, his kingdom, to joyously go in and let the full measure of the light they depended on be theirs. No longer will they ever be short of oil for light. God will be their light and their life. They Go In, Let Go and Let God.

Baptist preacher, William Holmes Border, pastor of the Wheat Street Church, likes to pray before his services, “Lord, let something happen here today that’s not in the bulletin.”

I pray we will all be ready when we show up for our God moment each day. I pray we will be attentive and be filled with God’s Holy Light. And I pray we will not be afraid to go into the Promised Land, the pay dirt of God’s kingdom who so loves us that he gave his one and only Son to lead the way from darkness into light.

AMEN