

## ST JOHNS BUCKLANDS BEACH

SERMON FOR SUNDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2014

PREPARED AND DELIVERED BY DICK MCDONALD CONGREGATIONAL MEMBER

Theme: Keeping Faith

Focus Text: Matthew 25: 1-13

Summary of Delivery:

- A simple story of a wedding in a village in Galilee. A great occasion.
- Wise and foolish bridesmaids (virgins) waiting for the bridegroom who could come to the bride's residence at any time, sometimes in the middle of the night.
- Following their marriage a couple did not go away for a honeymoon. Stayed at home for 7 – 14 days to celebrate – these foolish women missed because they were unprepared.
- Each had brought oil lamps, but only the wise had brought extra oil.
- The foolish asked for a loan of additional oil, but this was refused. Meanwhile the bridegroom arrives, is greeted by the 5 wise and they all go into the wedding feast, and the door is shut.
- Foolish having got replacement oil arrive, ask to be admitted but miss out “truly I do not know you”.
- Why did Jesus tell this story? Was it to
  - a. emphasize the importance of oil? Or
  - b. indicate being locked out from the Kingdom of Heaven? Or
  - c. celebrate and recommend greed?
- Further, it appears to contradict much of Jesus teaching – is this what it means?
- No to the above – Jesus is teaching His disciples and us in the lead up to His crucifixion and is preparing them for their and our ministry after His death, resurrection, ascension and His return on how we should live while we wait for His return. No one knows the day or hour when this will happen, only the Father knows.

- All life must be a constant preparation for that coming. When the Messiah comes is always to be anticipated but without any specific timing whatsoever – it could be today!
- This comes with at least 2 warnings:
  - a. there are certain things which cannot be obtained at the last moment, and
  - b. there are certain things which cannot be borrowed e.g. a relationship with God etc. and
  - c. to keep our lamp full we must make preparation to keep the Christian faith such as daily bible reading, regular attendance at worship and daily prayer.
- This parable is really about prayer and ensuring through the Holy Spirit that the oil in our lamp remains burning brightly.
- Our other reading, 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11 continues this theme of anticipating but not knowing when Christ will come again. This doctrine of the 2nd coming of Christ is called the Parousia.
- Paul uses a series of metaphors to illustrate this e.g. like a thief in the night etc
- To sum up there is a right way and a wrong way to prepare for Jesus return and history shows us that frenzied speculations about the exact time and place that this will occur dramatically misfire.
- These 2 readings outline the proper way to prepare:
  - a. live at all times so that His coming at any moment of day or night will not find us unready
  - b. keep our work up to date
  - c. live at peace with all – love is the medium of forgiveness and forgiveness obliterates sin and disempowers it altogether.
  - d. be careful what we are doing – be Christ-like in our living
  - e. pray constantly “your Kingdom come on earth as in Heaven” and “save us from the time of trial”
- Be faithful to the end. In the haunting tones of the beginning of Godspell  
 “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.....  
 Day by day ....see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly”.